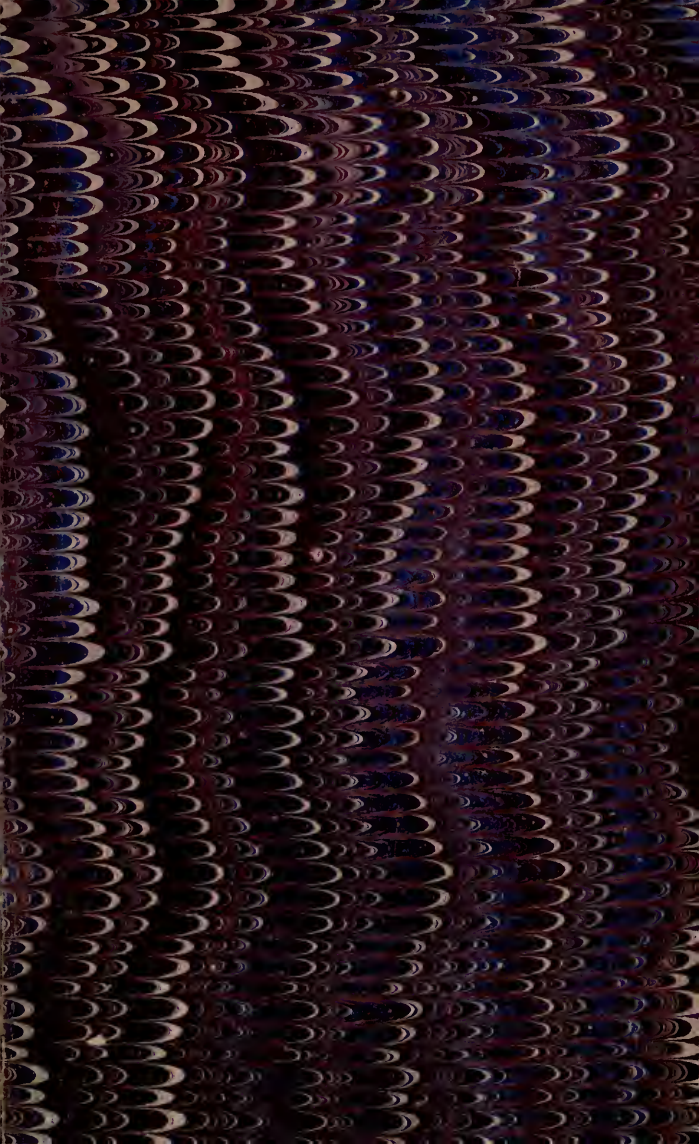


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# FABLES IN SONG.

BY

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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### 1.

HAD I miss'd my way ? It would seem so. Still,  
Scarce past is an hour of the matin prime  
Since safe I was sitting in front of the mill ;  
Where my first walk ever, this pure May time,  
Under the beeches, and round by the rill,  
'Twixt brawling ripple, and rustling bough,  
Hath its wonted end, by the brook ; that, now  
When the sweet birds sing together,  
Carolling clear in the cool, comes down  
From the breezy hills, and the sunburnt heather ;  
Guided about to his goal unknown  
By a glimmer of primrose buds new blown,  
And their breath on the balmy weather.

## 2.

Well, there by the mill, as I say,  
Where, between them, the brook and the bough  
For my sake make a musical bower,  
Safe I sat in the morn of the day ;  
And since there I was sitting, I vow  
That the day is scarce older an hour.  
But now ?  
Where am I ? who ought to know  
Every inch of this leafy land.  
Yet here, but a step at the most, or two,  
From the door of the well-known mill  
(Which all the while must be near at hand,  
For the sound of it follows me still)  
I am lost in a forest whose glades expand  
O'er me, before me, immense and dense ;  
Where shadow and sighing sound profound  
Pour into my spirit a sense intense  
Of dimness and distance ; and, turning around  
And around myself, I no further have got  
Than the wheel of that mill, which, the more to  
confound  
My confusion, I hear, tho' I see it not.

## 3.

I did well to be on my guard !  
Tho' my caution avail'd not much.  
One step more over the sward  
Which had seem'd so safe and hard,  
And the grass, or whatever I took for such,  
Giving suddenly way at my foot's first touch,  
Down with it, down, I fell  
Into the depths of a dell  
Sunless and silent and deep  
As the dim caverns of sleep.

## 4.

There, thro' the gloom in distress  
Gazing around, I could see  
That some four-footed stray-away less  
Keen of eye, or of footstep steady  
Than I myself, had been caught already  
By the snare which had thus caught me.  
In the hug of those horrible rocks,  
Unacquainted companions we,  
Like two vagabonds set in the stocks.  
But what could the creature be ?  
A fox ? Was it, truly, a fox ?  
Ha ! how got the rascal here ?

No matter ! he gets not out.  
'Tis the end of his bad career.

## 5.

Yet *is* it a fox ? I doubt,  
Now the gleam of his eyes grow clear  
Thro' the dim light round about.  
From the look in those wistful eyes  
Who could possibly recognise  
The rogue whose rascalities bold,  
By farmwife and fabulist told,  
Have so ruin'd his reputation ?  
What a sadness of resignation !

## 6.

And he seem'd to me wondrous old.

## 7.

I thought, as he eyed me so,  
He was asking pity from man :  
Tho' needs must the rascal know  
Men have put him under their ban.  
My soul was grieved, I confess,  
At the sight of the brute's distress,  
And I mutter'd, " Poor Reynard ! I see

Thou art lean and grey as a ghost,  
And the few teeth, age at the most  
Hath spared thee, are worn to a stump.  
If I can, I will set thee free.  
For the miller's pullets, tho' plump,  
Have nothing to fear from thee.  
And 'tis never too late to mend.  
Trust me ! I speak as a friend."

## 8.

He seem'd to understand ;  
Crept closer, and lick'd my hand.  
" There, there ! we are friends. But how  
To get out of this horrible hole ?  
Ha ! some issue, seems yonder : and now  
Up I climb by the oak-tree bole.  
Leap on my shoulder. Hold fast.  
Well clamber'd ! welcome the goal !  
Thou art safe on thy road at last.  
And I heartily wish I could say  
As much for myself : but, aghast,  
I perceive I have miss'd my way."

## 9.

Yet the creature will not go.  
He lingers : and still he eyes me

With those wonderful eyes, as tho'  
(Do they bless, beseech, or advise me?)  
There was something, still, he wanted.  
“What is it? Speak, then, speak!  
Nothing can now surprise me;  
Except that the spell should break.  
For I think I am here in a forest enchanted,  
And, if I can grant it, thy prayer is granted.”

## 10.

“Thou hast help’d me. I thank thee, man.”  
“What magic my fancy mocks?”  
“And will help thee, too, if I can.”  
“What art thou?” Sadly the fox  
Said, “I am the ancient Fox of Fable.  
Few are the men I have met with, able  
To understand me; and still more few  
The men that listen to those who do.”

## 11.

“What!” I exclaim’d, “thou hast known, then, thou,  
That spiteful hunchback, old Æsop?”—“I know  
That Æsop,” he answer’d in scorn,  
“Hath no hump on his honest back;

And, never having been born,  
He never hath died." "Alack!  
Thou art, indeed, I perceive,  
The Fox of Fable! Pray,  
What next wilt thou have me believe?"

## 12.

"That Æsop is living to-day."  
"Where, prithee?"

## 13.

"In me : in thee :  
For he lives in each living creature  
(Man, beast, bird, blossom, and tree),  
And his life is the love of nature.  
The complaint, that was half a caress,  
Men have turn'd into bitterness :  
The counsel, cordial and bland,  
To a churlish reprimand :  
Justice, robed in her ruth,  
To Resentment eager to smite :  
And Sagacity, Humour, and Truth,  
Into Sarcasm, Satire, and Spite.  
Thus, alas ! when, to banish the true,  
A false Æsop you form'd, of your own,

We, the children of Æsop, withdrew.  
For we found that to leave you alone  
Was then all you had left to us. Few  
Are the men with whom now we are able  
To converse, as our wont was of old :  
And, afar in the Forest of Fable,  
With, between us, a world sad and cold,  
Safe we dwell, out of your view.  
But, O man, thou hast open'd thy heart  
Unto mine, and thus broken the spell :  
So my thanks prithee take, ere we part,  
In the language of Fable. Farewell !”

## 14.

“ Stay ! ” I cried, “ one last word, I implore !  
Must that word be farewell, fellow-creature ?  
May we meet, then, no more, no more,  
In the motherly arms of Nature ?  
Ah, those friendly voices of yore !  
Could I hear them, I fain would record  
All they said to me ; writing it down  
Simply, honestly, true to a word.”

## 15.

“ My part I have done. Do thine own,”  
Said the Fox (as we turn'd, and stood

Where, pleasantly welcoming me,  
Peep'd the mill, once more, thro' the wood)  
"Love us, and—we shall see."

## 16.

"Love you?" I cried; "but what use in that,  
If I never may meet you again?  
Never mingle among you in brotherly chat!  
Must I love, and yet seek you in vain?"  
The Fox hesitated, then sigh'd,  
"Ah, friend, have you ever yet tried?  
They fail not to find us, who seek,  
Though disguised do we go amongst men.  
Approach, I say, question, and speak  
Heart to heart with all creatures: and then,  
. . . Well, hast thou not spoken to me  
From thy heart? and mine own, was it dumb?"

## 17.

"Then," I said, "whatsoever they be  
That I meet, as the chance may come,  
If I speak to, and question, them all—  
Bees that hover, and blossoms that hum;  
The beast of the field or the stall;  
The trees, leaves, rushes, and grasses;

The rivulet, running away ;  
The bird of the air, as it passes ;  
Or the mountains, that motionless stay ;  
And yet whose irremovable masses  
Keep changing, as dreams do, all day ;  
Will they answer me ? Tell me, O tell !  
For, look you, I love them well."

## 18.

The Fox, as he turn'd aside,  
Gave me a friendly glance ;  
And, fading into the forest, replied  
With encouraging voice, "Perchance.  
Try !" And so . . . Well, I have tried.

# FABLES IN SONG.



## I.

### THE THISTLE.

MOTTO.

*(A Flower's Ballad.)*

It was a thorn,  
And it stood forlorn  
In the burning sunrise land :

A blighted thorn,  
And at eve and morn  
Thus it sigh'd to the desert sand—

“ Every flower,  
By its beauty's power,  
With a crown of glory is crown'd.

“ No crown have I,  
For a crown I sigh,  
For a crown that I have not found.

“ A crown ! a crown !  
A crown of mine own,  
To wind in a maiden’s hair ! ”

Sad thorn, why grieve ?  
Thou a crown shalt weave,  
But not for a maiden to wear.

That crown shall shine  
When all crowns save thine,  
With the glory they gave, are gone :

For, thorn, my thorn,  
Thy crown shall be worn  
By the King of Sorrows alone.

#### PRELUDE.

The green grass-blades aquiver  
With joy at the dawn of day  
(For the most inquisitive ever  
Of the flowers of the field are they)  
Lisp’d it low to their lazy  
Neighbours that flat on the ground,  
Dandelion and daisy,  
Lay still in a slumber sound :

But soon, as a ripple of shadow  
Runs over the whisperous wheat,  
The rumour ran over the meadow  
With its numberless fluttering feet :  
It was told by the water-cresses  
To the brooklet that, in and out  
Of his garrulous green recesses,  
For gossip was gadding about :  
And the brooklet, full of the matter,  
Spread it abroad with pride ;  
But he stopp'd to gossip and chatter,  
And turn'd so often aside,  
That his news got there before him  
Ere his journey down was done ;  
And young leaves in the vale laughed o'er him  
" We know it ! THE SNOW IS GONE ! "  
The snow is gone ! but ye only  
Know how good doth that good news sound,  
Whose hearts, long buried and lonely,  
Have been waiting, winter-bound,  
For the voice of the wakening angel  
To utter the welcome evangel,  
" The snow is gone : re-arise,  
And blossom as heretofore,  
Hopes, imaginings, memories,  
And joys of the days of yore ! "

What are the tree-tops saying, swaying  
This way all together ?  
“ The winter is past ! the south wind at last  
Is come, and the sunny weather ! ”  
The trees ! there is no mistaking them,  
For the trees, they never mistake :  
And you may tell, by the way of the stem,  
What the way is, the wind doth take.  
So, if the tree-tops nod this way,  
It is the south wind that is come ;  
And, if to the other side nod they,  
Go, clothe ye warm, or bide at home !  
The flowers all know what the tree-tops say ;  
They are no more deaf than the trees are dumb.  
And they do not wait to hear it twice said  
If the news be good ; but, discreet and gay,  
The awaked buds dance from their downy bed,  
With pursed-up mouth, and with peeping head,  
By many a dim green winding way.

’Tis the white anemone, fashion’d so  
Like to the stars of the winter snow,  
First thinks, “ If I come too soon, no doubt  
I shall seem but the snow that hath staid too long,  
So ’tis I that will be Spring’s unguess’d scout.”  
And wide she wanders the woods among.

Then, from out of the mossiest hiding-places,  
Smile meek moonlight-colour'd faces  
Of pale primroses puritan,  
In maiden sisterhoods demure ;  
Each virgin flowret faint and wan  
With the bliss of her own sweet breath so pure.  
And the borage, blue-eyed, with a thrill of pride,  
(For warm is her welcome on every side)  
From Elfland coming to claim her place,  
Gay garments of verdant velvet takes  
All creased from the delicate travelling case  
Which a warm breeze breaks. The daisy awakes  
And opens her wondering eyes, yet red  
About the rims with a too long sleep ;  
Whilst, bold from his ambush, with helm on head  
And lance in rest, doth the bulrush leap.

The violets meet, and disport themselves,  
Under the trees, by tens and twelves.  
The timorous cowslips, one by one,  
Trembling, chilly, atiptoe stand  
On little hillocks and knolls alone ;  
Watchful pickets, that wave a hand  
For signal sure that the snow is gone,  
Then around them call their comrades all  
In a multitudinous, mirthful band ;

Till the field is so fill'd with grass and flowers  
That wherever, with flashing footsteps, fall  
The sweet, fleet, silvery April showers,  
They never can touch the earth, which is  
Cover'd all over with crocuses,  
And the clustering gleam of the buttercup,  
And the blithe grass blades that stand straight up  
And make themselves small, to leave room for all  
The nameless blossoms that nestle between  
Their sheltering stems in the herbage green ;  
Sharp little soldiers, trusty and true,  
Side by side in good order due ;  
Arms straight down, and heads forward set,  
And saucily-pointed bayonet.  
Up the hillocks, and down again,  
The green grass marches into the plain,  
If only a light wind over the land  
Whisper the welcome word of command.

## PART I.

'Twas long after the grass and the flowers, one day,  
That there came straggling along the way  
A little traveller, somewhat late.  
Tired he was ; and down he sat

In the ditch by the road, where he tried to nestle  
Out of the dust and the noontide heat.  
Poor little vagabond wayside Thistle !  
In the ditch was his only safe retreat.  
Flung out of the field as soon as found there,  
And banisht the garden, where should he stay ?  
Wherever he roam'd, still Fortune frown'd there,  
And, wherever he settled, spurn'd him away.

From place to place, had he wander'd long  
The weary high road, parcht with thirst.  
Now here, in the ditch, for awhile among  
The brambles hidden, he crouch'd ; and first  
Wistfully eyed, on the other side,  
A fresh green meadow with flowrets pied ;  
And then, with a pang, as he peep'd and pried,  
“ Oh, to rest there ! ” he thought, and sigh'd.  
“ Oh, to rest there, it is all so fair !  
Yonder wanders a brooklet, sure ?  
No ! it is only the mill-sluiice small.  
But he looks like a brook, so bright and pure,  
And his banks are broider'd with violets all.  
What a hurry he seems to be in ! Ah, why  
Doth he hasten so fast ? If I were he,  
There would I linger, and rest, and try  
To be left in peace. Take heed ! (ah me,

He doth not hear me—how weary I am !)  
Take heed, for the sake of thine old mill-dam,  
    Thou little impetuous fool ! I pass'd  
Over the bridge, as I came by the road ;  
    And under the bridge I saw rolling fast  
A full-grown river, so deep and broad !  
If you go on running like that—nor look  
Where you are running—you foolish brook,  
    I predict you will fall into trouble at last,  
    And the great big river will eat you up.  
That is all you will get by your heedless haste.  
    Oh, if I were you, it is there I'd stop,  
There where you are, with the flowers and grass.  
    For I know what it is to wander, alas !  
    It is only to fall from bad to worse,  
    And find no rest in the universe.

“ Soft !—I have half a mind to try—  
    Could one slip in yonder quietly,  
Where the rippled damp of the deep grass spares  
    Cool rest to each roving butterfly,  
How pleasant 'twould be ! There is nobody by,  
    And perhaps there is nobody owns or cares  
To look after yon meadow. It seems so still,  
Silent, and safe—shall I venture ?—I will !  
    From the ditch it is but a step or two.

And, maybe, the owner is dead, and the heirs  
Away in the town, and will never know."

## PART II.

Then the little Thistle atiptoe stood,  
All in a tremble, sharp yet shy.  
The vagabond's conscience was not good.  
He had been so often a trespasser sly,  
He had been so often caught by the law,  
He had been so often beaten before :  
He was still so small : if a spade he saw,  
He mutter'd a *Paternoster* o'er,  
And cower'd. So, cautiously thrusting out  
Here a timorous leaf, there a tiny sprout,  
And then dropping a seed, and so waiting anon  
For a chance lift got from the wind—still on,  
With a hope that the sun and the breeze might  
please  
To be helpful and kind—by degrees he frees  
And feels his way with a fluttering heart.  
In the ditch there were heaps of stones to pass.  
'They scratch'd him, and tore him, and made him  
smart,  
And ruin'd his leaves. But those leaves, alas,

Already so tatter'd and shatter'd were,  
That to keep them longer was worth no care ;  
And at last he was safe in the meadow ; and there  
“ Ah, ha ! ” sigh'd the Thistle ; “ so far, so well !  
If I can but stay where I am, I shall fare  
Blithe as the bee in the blossom's bell.  
How green it is here, and how fresh, and fair !  
And, oh, what a pleasure henceforth to dwell  
In this blest abode ! to have done with the road,  
And got rid of the ditch ! Ah, who can tell  
The rapture of rest to the wanderer's breast ? ”

Down out of heaven a dewdrop fell  
On the head of the Thistle : and he fell asleep  
In the lap of the twilight soft and deep.

### PART III.

At sunrise he woke : and he still was there,  
In the bright grass, breathing the balmy air.  
He stretch'd his limbs, and he shook off the dust,  
And he wash'd himself in the morning dew ;  
And, opening his pedlar's pack, out-thrust  
A spruce little pair of leaflets new ;

And made for himself a fine white ruff,  
About his neck to wear;  
And pruned and polish'd his prickles tough;  
And put on a holiday air.  
And "If only nobody finds me out!"  
He laugh'd, as he loll'd among  
The grass, delighted, and look'd about,  
And humm'd a homely song;  
Which he loved because, like himself, 'twas known  
As a wanderer here and there,

*"A crown! a crown!  
A crown of mine own,  
To wind in a maiden's hair!"*

But . . . a sweep of the scythe, and a stamp of the  
foot,  
And "Vile weed! is there no getting rid of thee  
ever?"  
And what little was spared by the scythe, the boot,  
With its hobnails, hasten'd to crush and shiver.

## PART IV.

'Twas the Farmer, who just then happen'd to pass.  
He had gone to the field to cut some grass

For his beast that morn ; and no sooner saw  
The trespasser there *in flagrante delicto*,  
Than, scythe in hand, he enforced the law  
On the luckless offender, *vi et ictu*.

All mangled and bruised, the poor little Thistle  
With his desperate roots to the soil clung fast.  
The Farmer away, with a careless whistle,  
Homeward over the meadow pass'd.  
The Thistle breathed freër, and shook his gasht head.  
“ All’s well, if it be no worse ! ” he said.  
“ My crown is gone, but ’twill grow again.  
There is many another (*I feel it*) in me.  
And one must not make too much of the pain.  
Only, you good saints, let me not be  
Forced, for my sins, to return to the road !  
*Only not that !* If I can but contrive  
To rest here, somehow or other ! I see  
One may lose his head in this brave abode.  
But I’m on my guard, and I’ll struggle and strive,  
As long as I live, to keep alive.”  
Then his roots he burrow’d more deep and broad.

But every day ’twas the self-same thing !  
Tho’ he made himself little, and hid his head,

Trying, with all his might, to cling  
Close to the soil, and appear to be dead.  
For his spacious leaves, that were carved and curl'd  
For Corinthian columns in temples fair,  
He could not check them when these unfurl'd  
Their flourishing architecture there,  
And, all about him their beauty spreading,  
Layer on layer uprose from below ;  
And the hardy young head, in despite of beheading,  
Sprang up again—for the scythe to mow !  
Round and about him, each blossom was blowing.  
No chance of blowing had *he* found ever :  
Who no sooner was seen than the sharp steel mowing,  
Or the harsh foot crushing him, stopp'd the  
endeavour.  
And “ Oh, blessèd,” he sigh'd, “ is the blossom that  
blows !  
Colours I know of, no eyes yet see.  
But I dare not show them ; and nobody knows,  
Nobody guesses, what's hidden in me !  
In all the world but one creature, alas,  
For love's sake seeks me ; and *he* is an ass.”

## PART V.

So went the Spring : and so came and went  
The Summer. The aftermath was mown :  
And there where, erewhile, in one element  
Of colour and odour together blent,  
By the balmy breath of the light wind blown,  
The flowing grass and the bending blooms  
(A rapturous river of gleams and glooms!)  
Had rippled and roll'd, lay clods of mould  
Black and bald ; and between them grew  
Coarse aftergrowths, grey, bristly, and cold ;  
And the beast of the field had the residue.  
The primrose, cowslip, and violet,  
With their glow-worm glitter were gone ; and the white  
Anemone's constellations, set,  
Had left the earth dark as a starless night,  
Where the grass fell off from the woodland wet.  
The blue-eyed borage was blinded quite.  
But, outliving his betters one by one,  
In the flowerless field, with no thought of flight,  
The brave little Thistle remain'd-- alone !  
And, since skies were cold, and suns were dim,  
No one noticed, and no one praised,  
But also no one *maltreated*, him.

And the pensive beasts of the field, that grazed  
The twice-cropt grass, where their wandering whim  
Led them, lazy, from spot to spot,  
Shunn'd the Thistle and harm'd him not.

## PART VI.

Then the Thistle, at last, could enlarge his store  
Of the few joys fate had vouchsafed him sparely.  
Baffled a hundred times, and more,  
Bruised, and torn, and surviving barely,  
Still he *survived*: and for him, him only,  
Green leaves gladden'd the leafless cold  
Where, Summer's orphan, he linger'd lonely  
Over her grave in the frozen mould.  
For, as days, long dead, by a bard born after  
Are invoked, and revive in a form more fair,  
All the bliss that was beauty, the life that was laughter,  
Ere the frolic fields were bereft and bare,  
The lone Thistle renew'd and transform'd to his own;  
As flower by flower—from the fervid rose,  
Whose beauty so well to herself is known,  
That she blushes proud of the truth she knows,  
To the violet, Modesty's vanquisht child,  
Hiding her head in the sylvan places

Where her wandering wooer, the March gust wild,  
Hath left her faint from his harsh embraces,  
All of them—all, in a dream divine  
To the heart of the Thistle sweet secrets told  
Of blushes that burn, and of brows that shine,  
With passion of purple and glory of gold.  
So all flowers of the field were alive in one :  
And the glow of his sheen, and the gloss of his  
down,  
Were as jewels dead queens have confided alone  
To the craftsman who fashions them all to a crown.

For each hope in the heart of the poor plant hidden,  
Each vision of bliss and of beauty, nurst,  
With a passion by Prejudice check'd and chidden,  
For a life by the fiat of Fortune curst,  
Rushing forthwith into rich reality,  
Fill'd the cup of a quenchless thirst  
Till it flow'd with exuberant prodigality,  
And his long-pent life into blossom burst.  
A single blossom : but statelier far,  
And fairer, than many a million are.  
A splendid disc, full and flashing with wonder !  
As the sea-rose swims on the water, so  
That effulgent star on the bleak earth under  
Lay spread out in a luminous glow.

And "At last I can blossom! blossom! blossom!"

The Thistle laugh'd, greeting the earth and heaven,  
And he blossom'd his whole heart out of his bosom.

And all was forgotten, save all that was given.

## II.

## POSSESSION.

A PoET loved a Star,  
And to it whisper'd nightly,  
“ Being so fair, why art thou, love, so far ?  
Or why so coldly shine, who shinest so brightly ?  
O Beauty, woo'd and unpossest,  
O might I to this beating breast  
But clasp thee once, and then die, blest ! ”

That Star her Poet's love,  
So wildly warm, made human.  
And, leaving for his sake her heaven above,  
His Star stoop'd earthward, and became a Woman.  
“ Thou who hast woo'd and hast possest,  
My lover, answer, which was best,  
The Star's beam, or the Woman's breast ? ”

“ I miss from heaven,” the man replied,  
“ A light that drew my spirit to it.”  
And to the man the woman sigh'd,  
“ I miss from earth a poet.”

## III.

## WHO'S IN THE RIGHT?

## PRELUDE.

A BATTERY, posted in haste, at last,  
On the brow of a hill in the foeman's flank,  
Had decided the fate of the day. Fast, fast,  
In many a broken and billowy rank  
The bewilder'd rear of his battle fled.  
But, rapid behind, like a rushing wind  
That rattles with hail, to the lowland red  
Down from the ridge of the smoky hill,  
The cavalry clash'd in a clattering shower ;  
Crushing the harvest, and chasing still  
All that was left of a nation's power.

And wide it swept over the wasted plain,  
That rapture of ruin, red in the glare  
Of burning barns ; and the bolted rain  
Sang thro' the blacken'd and sulphurous air,

As in storm it stream'd and subsided again ;  
Till all was still save the far-off blare  
Of a ghostly bugle, echoing chill ;  
Whose echoes, heard by the yet unslain  
O'er leagues of litter, from hill to hill  
Proclaim'd that the hurly-burly was done  
A kingdom lost and a kingdom won !

## PART I.

## 1.

In that hollow battery's earthen mound,  
Gaily gather'd the guns around,  
The officers, free at the fall of the day,  
Were discussing with whom the achievement lay  
Of so great a success. And said one of them, " Friends,  
Was there ever a captain so skill'd in war  
As our gallant Prince ? Bright Victory wends  
With him, wherever his flag flies, far  
From city to city ; and lucky are we  
Whose fortunes follow the guiding star  
Of a hero, whose genius, all agree,  
Is as great as his glorious actions are."

Another, in answer, his shoulders shrugg'd,  
And "Ay," as his shaggy beard he tugg'd,  
"So is every conqueror styled," quoth he,  
"Though owed to others his conquests be.  
But the few to whom war's art is known  
Know 'tis the General Staff alone  
That organises and orders all;  
To each arm of the service assigns that place  
Where best the effect of its force may fall,  
And the plan of the whole campaign doth trace."  
" 'Maybe," said a third, "that by these and those,  
In a general way, is good service done.  
No fruit can ripen, of course one knows,  
Without the assistance of soil and sun.  
But the question is—when your fruit is ripe,  
How to pluck it." (And here, his pipe  
He lit, as he added) "That, you see  
"Can only be done by the Cavalry."  
"You forget," said a fourth, an Engineer,  
"The man who posted this battery here.  
The foe had out-number'd us, ten to one,  
And would, but for him, have o'erwhelm'd us too."  
"Posted the battery? Easily done!"  
A sergeant mutter'd. "Forget not, you,  
Which of us was it, that pointed the gun."

## 2.

'Neath the battery wall where these conversed,  
A wounded gunner unheeded lay ;  
By a random shell, that had near him burst,  
His feet were shatter'd and shorn away.  
His lips were baked by a burning thirst,  
On his limbs did the icy ague prey :  
The yet smouldering brand in his frozen hand  
He grasp'd ; and follow'd, with eyes aflame,  
The far-off blaze, that greeted his gaze  
With the deadly effect of his life's last aim.  
Not a word had he heard  
Of the talk around him.  
He died. And, with pride  
In death dealt, death crown'd him.  
Pain's parcht furrows placidly glided  
Out of his weather-beaten face ;  
But a silent smile of triumph slid,  
Under death's hovering hand, in their place ;  
And death, for a sign, congeal'd it there,  
Stern, and fair.

## 3.

Now, of all the glory that gilt that day  
Not a gleam yet glows in these after ages.  
All that glitter'd hath faded away ;  
All, save the name of the Prince ; in her pages  
By History written, though seldom read.  
All else is dead.

## PART II.

## 1.

Clio, with clarion, palm, and book,  
Pass on! Not thine are we.  
Thy plainer sister's shepherd crook  
We follow ; seeking flowers forsook,  
That breathe about the rural brook,  
And win the wandering bee.

What History oft, in stately pride,  
With haughty gesture spurns aside,  
Wild Fable from the wayside field  
Picks up, and lays to heart.  
And truths, by her to us reveal'd,  
Do we to you impart :

## 2.

How that bronze tube, round which erewhile  
This diseussion was carried so high,  
Mock'd, as it listen'd, and said with a smile,  
"Men boast, but the victor am I!"  
"Thou?" growl'd the Cannon Ball—"thou! is it thou  
Who didst level yon walls with the plain,  
Mowing down men, as the harvesters mow  
Hollow paths thro' the thick of the grain?  
Braggart! 'tis I who alone can do this.  
'Tis the brush of my brazen orb bursts wide  
War's mason'd masses!"—Where to, with a hiss,  
"Silence, blockhead!" the Powder replied.  
"On the arsenal floor hadst thou rested still,  
Were it not for me, who thy wings provide.  
And thou art but the deed: it is I am the will."  
But, as thus he mutter'd, with surly pride,  
"Vagabond!" scornfully splutter'd the Match,  
"Boast not thou in thy master's presence!  
Ball, Cannon, and Powder,—inert batch  
Of base stuff, stirr'd by my quickening essence,—  
The Fire am I, and my slaves are ye.  
He, whose vitals a vulture tore,  
Well was he 'ware of the worth of me,  
When from heaven he stole, in the days of yore,

The spark that in my Promethean wand  
Yet glows with the heat of a god's invention."

## 3.

"Attention!"

An officer cried, in command.

## 4.

For faint, and afar, with a dying spasm,  
The bruised-out battle was breathing again.  
And the gun was charged, from his gaping chasm,  
To clear it away from the cumber'd plain  
Where it crawl'd in pain.

## 5.

The gunner pointed the gun to the mark.  
With an eager spark  
The ardent match, death's nimble adept,  
To the touch-hole leapt,  
And . . . . went out in the dark.  
Not a groan, not a flame, from the great gun came,  
Not a belch of smoke : unejected slept  
In his burthen'd gullet the sullen bullet :  
The captains were cursing, the gunners were grum-  
bling,  
And, drop upon droplet, as down it came tumbling,

Merrily, mockingly laugh'd the light Shower :  
" O fools ! lo, I sprinkle a silvery twinkle  
Of beads from my bosom, and where is your power ?  
Black dust of death, art thou melted quite  
Into a harmless unsavoury sop ?  
What of your lightnings ? where is their light ?  
Quencht in a quagmire, slain by a slop !  
Your valorous thunders, voices of might ?  
Struck dumb by a dancing drop ! "

## 6.

The dying Fire heard this,  
And with a hiss  
Spat out the scorn of his indignant hate,  
" Demon of Impotence !  
Boast not that thou art great,  
Upon the poor pretence  
Of greatness hinder'd and defeated by thee.  
Force to annihilate  
Force, hast thou : but the gods deny thee  
Force to create. "

## 7.

" Stay, not so fast ! "  
Sighingly answer'd him the streaming Rain.

“ Destroyer, what hast *thou* created ? Cast  
On thy brief work (death, devastation, pain)  
One glare—thy last !

Show me thy greatness. Is it yonder plain  
Where thou hast pass'd,  
Leaving behind thee hideous heaps of slain  
And ruin vast ?

Lo, with my little drops, I bless again  
And beautify the fields which thou didst blast !  
Rend, wither, waste, and ruin, what thou wilt,  
But call not Greatness what the gods call Guilt.  
Blossoms and grass from blood in battle spilt,  
And popped corn, I bring.

'Mid mouldering Babels, to Oblivion built,  
My violets spring.

Little by little, my small drops have strength  
To deck with green delights the grateful earth :  
Little by little, to large seas at length  
Small springs give birth :

By little things the growing world grows great,  
And of great doings rests but little done :  
From little fibres in the loom of Fate  
Time's robe is spun :

Small are the cymbals that, when clasht, proclaim  
The march of Force : from shafts of tiny stature  
Co-operant atoms build the crystal frame

Of mighty Nature.

By little ducts Thought's widening river runs  
Thro' nerve and brain, yet fills the ages vast,  
And even the secret of the central suns

Invades at last :

In little waves light leaps from star to star :  
Small pencils paint the welkin's azure pall :  
And small life's primal universes are,  
Yet they are all."

## IV.

## PREMATURITY.

## 1.

IF aught in nature be unnatural,

It is the slaying by a springtide frost  
Of Spring's own children : cheated blossoms all,  
Betray'd i' the birth, and born for burial

Of budding promise, scarce beloved ere lost !  
Once, in the silence of a clear Spring night,  
This still, cold-footed Frost, with footstep light

Slid thro' the tepid season, like a ghost

Wrapt in thin white.

Flitting, he smote the first-born of the year,  
And, ere the break of day, their pretty buds were sere.

## 2.

But the blossoms that perish'd  
Were those alone

Which, in haste to be cherish'd,  
With loosen'd zone  
Had too soon to the sun all their beauty shown.  
Lightly-vested,  
Amorous-breasted,  
Blossom of almond, blossom of peach :  
Impatient children, with hearts unsteady,  
So young, and yet more precocious each  
Than the leaves of the Summer, and blushing already !

## 3.

These perish'd, because too soon they lived ;  
But the oak flower, prudent and proud, survived.  
“ If the sun would win me,” she thought, “ he must  
Wait for me, wooing me warmly the while ;  
For a flower's a fool, if a flower would trust  
Her whole sweet being to one first smile.”

V.

ANCIENTS AND MODERNS.

1.

I' THE city of the ruins of the world  
 A rumour flutter'd, on that breeze unfurl'd  
 Whose puff-cheek'd Æolus is Public Prate,  
 That some vine's owner, digging the estate  
 Of classic dirt which lodged his lucky vine,  
 Had stumbled on a statue, Greek, and fine.

2.

Priests, princes, populace—Rome's papal fold  
 Prolific—rams and lambs—the young, the old—  
 The learnèd and unlearnèd—all came flocking  
 (Some clad in scarlet hat and purple stocking;  
 Some, with no stockings, and no hats at all;  
 But each as blithe as for a festival)

To gaze, and praise, and bless the favour'd spot,  
Whence Rome, renascent, such a prize had got  
Back from the ruins of herself. For there,  
In radiant resurrection, fresh and fair  
As when that statue first with classic grace  
The clement Cæsar's palace deck'd, i' the place  
Where sank the baths of Titus from the sun,  
Apollo's patriot priest, Laöcoön,  
Reveal'd to Roman crowds, now Christian grown,  
That Pagan Anguish which, in Parian stone,  
The Rhodian artist had express'd so well  
That here for ever Pain hath Beauty's spell.

## 3.

Down in the wreck and rummage of the ground  
Wherein this famous statue had been found,  
A snake, emergent from his clayey chasm,  
Had watch'd with wonder Rome's enthusiasm.  
And, when the crowd was gone, the reptile gazed  
Upon the statue which the crowd had praised.  
Laöcoön, and his sons, this snake esteem'd  
But secondary parts of what he deem'd  
The sculptor's main design. As what one sees  
(When painted, haply, by the Veronese)  
Most to admire in Cana's banquet board,

For nuptial feast with goodly goblets stored  
 And viands spread—is not the wine and meat,  
 But the brave guests who drink it and who eat;  
 So, what this reptile deem'd the chiefest part  
 Of the whole group, and of its artist's art  
 The choicest specimen, was—naturally—  
 Not the mere victims of the slaughterous sally  
 Made by its kind on the Laöcoöns,  
 (Not even the father, and much less the sons)  
 Who for those snakes were as a banquet spread,  
 But the snakes' selves, who on that banquet fed.

4.

And “Is that all?” the ambitious reptile cried,  
 “As much, and more can I!” Then, puffed with pride,  
 About the statue of a wrestler old,  
 That stood thereby, his fluctuous rings he roll'd,  
 Regurgitating gulfy waves, that wound  
 In sliding sinuous ripple round and round;  
 Knotted the athlete's knees in cumbrous coil,  
 Clove to his stretcht throat, and with slimy toil  
 Strove to crush flat the swell'd and starting throng  
 Of bulky sinews that, like bulwarks strong,  
 Buttress'd the large limbs of the marble man.  
 Thrice round the raised right arm the reptile ran

His rolling orbs ; and, winding in and out,  
With clasp convulsive girt the breast about.

## 5.

In vain ! For not one massive muscle shrank,  
Bruised by the writhing worm's embrace ; nor sank  
The raised right arm ; nor groan'd the granite breast.  
And the mute mouth its marble smile compress'd,  
Calm as before, 'twixt serious lips serene.  
Naught marr'd that noble form's majestic mien,  
And gesture stern. The sole disfigurement  
Was its aggressor's ; as, with strength nigh spent,  
The serpent strain'd. The sole contortion shown  
Was all its reptile rival's ; not its own.

## 6.

When the great gods, grown jealous of great men,  
Great vengeance take on human greatness ; when  
One grandeur to another, grander still,  
Succumbs ; when the Divinity, whose will  
Goads man with agony, doth not disdain  
To beautify the expression of man's pain ;  
When he, who doth with equal power inspire  
The harmonious strings of the delightful lyre  
And the fell serpent fangs of Tenedos,

Is King Apollo ; then, with loss on loss,  
Albeit the waves of blind Oblivion  
Wash out wide empires as they wander on,  
Tho' slowly over temple, tower, and town,  
Grow green the grass of Lethe's drowsy down,  
And the dull weed of dark Forgetfulness  
Round spotless statues its accurst caress  
Do creeping wind,—yet this the gods vouchsafe :  
If from the deep men save one wandering waif  
Of wrecks that once immortal shapes have borne,  
Still of some grace divine not all forlorn  
Men's lives are left. One fragment, if no more,  
Of those great forms great thoughts have fill'd of yore,  
Suffices Beauty to reveal her will,  
Marr'd, murder'd, buried, but triumphant still !

## 7.

Well-meaning, but unwise, contortionists  
Of our well-meaning times, whose tragic twists  
Try modern nerves, appease your emulous rage  
On the limp substance of the living age,  
But touch not ye the antique marble. Chill  
To your embrace, and unresponsive still,  
Its firm long-frozen grain will foil for ever  
The feeble fierceness of your fangs' endeavour.

For, O ambitious snakes ! tho' snakes you be,  
You are not snakes of Tenedos : nor we  
Laöcoöns ; nor the wrath you represent  
The wrath of an Apollo. Be content  
To writhe in elegiac ecstasies  
Round subjects fitted to your strength and size.  
Feed on fresh food. But seek no second feasts  
From the old Sun-God's long-since-perisht priests.

## VI.

## A PROVISION FOR LIFE.

A PINE-TREE bless'd its favour'd fate, because  
Room to grow barely 'twixt the grudging jaws  
Of one of the chapt sandstone's gravell'd flaws

It found: where early chance had cast its lot  
On a bare rock, with leave to thrive, or not,  
As later chance might choose, in that chill spot.

“Ah, what good fortune!” sigh'd the grateful tree,  
“That in this fissure the wind planted me!  
But for its inch of earth, what should I be?”

Fool! Thy good fortune was not the bestowing  
Of that scant handful of earth's overflowing.  
It was—and is—thy faculty of growing.

To E. L.,

WITH FABLES VII. AND VIII.

FAIR soul, that o'er mine own dost shine  
So fair, so far above,  
Dear heart, that hast so close to mine  
The home of thy true love :

Be thine these songs of Far and Near !  
Two worlds their sources are :  
Each makes the other doubly dear,  
The near one and the far.

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VII.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS ; OR, THE FAR.

PART I.

1.

WHEN little kings, whose race was run  
A little while ago,  
Had little thrones to sit upon,  
And little else to do,

Within a little town, remote  
From Europe's larger scenes,  
There dwelt a man of little note,  
Who lived on little means.

## 2.

A man, he was, of humble birth and mind,  
His life was lowly, small was his estate.  
Yet was there ever a human life confined  
In bounds so narrow by ungenerous fate,  
But it had in it something far and strange ?  
This man, from youth to age, had lived and grown  
In a great longing for a far blue range  
Of hills that hover'd o'er his native town.  
Ne'er had his footsteps climb'd those mountains blue,  
But half his life, and all his thoughts, dwelt there.  
He was a man beyond himself. They drew  
His being out of him, and made it fair.  
For wheresoe'er his gaze around him roved,  
There were those beautiful blue hills. And he,  
Who lived, not in himself, but them, so loved  
And so revered them, that they ceased to be  
To him mere hills, mere human feet may wend.  
Their azure summits, to his longing view,  
Were features of a dear, though distant friend,  
In kingly coronal and mantle blue.

## 3.

And "Oh," he mused, "full sure am I  
Those mountains feel, in silent joy,  
The love my gaze doth give them. They  
Seek it, indeed, with signs all day ;  
Down drawing o'er their shoulders fair,  
This way and that, soft veils of air,  
And colours, never twice the same,  
Woven of wind, and dew, and flame,  
And strange cloud-shadows, and slant showers.

"That is their speech. 'Tis unlike ours,  
Easy to learn, tho', if one tries ;  
One only has to use his eyes.

The colours are the vowels. These  
Are liquid links whose mobile ease  
Such fluent combination grants  
To those substantial consonants,  
Precipitous crags, and sudden peaks.  
The accents are the lightning-streaks  
And thunder-claps, that render, each,  
Such emphasis to mountain speech.

Next follow fog and mist, which are  
Verbs we may call irregular ;  
Perplexing when at first you view them,

But persevere, and you'll get thro' them.  
Then comes the rain, which just supplies  
The necessary quantities  
Of notes of admiration. Far  
Too many, folks may think they are.  
But if such folks could understand  
The mountains, there on every hand  
They'd find about them more, far more,  
Than notes of admiration, score  
On score, suffice for. Think, what lands  
And peoples every peak commands !  
Then find the statesman that knows how  
To govern one land. As for two,  
That task's beyond the best, we feel.  
Now, had we, like the hills, to deal  
With winds, and storms, and clouds, and snows,  
Nor lose our dignified repose,  
Who'd wonder why the hills abound  
In thoughts so serious, so profound,  
About what men, when met together,  
Talk, without thinking, of—the weather ?  
But still to talk it is men's wont,  
Both when they think and when they don't.  
Ah, good old hills ! If Majesty  
Should, some day hence, be forced to fly  
From all her other thrones on earth,

'Tis there, with you, who gave her birth,  
That she her latest home would find,  
*Above*, but still *among*, mankind!"

## PART II.

## 1.

Thus ever the fancies of the man  
(Like their own restless rills)  
Upon the mighty mountains ran,  
Refresht by far-off hills.  
Not one of his neighbours, he could swear,  
Half so well as those mountains, knew him,  
Who wrapp'd his soul in their robe of blue.  
And, if that were fancy, *this* was true:  
That, whether or not, those mountains fair  
For the good of this man had a thought or care,  
Much good they had contrived to do him  
By simply being there.

## 2.

His only wish was to tell them of it,  
And requite them for it. But not, as now,  
When to every peak, with the snow above it,

And the azure of heaven above the snow,  
It was only his wishes that found their way ;  
But among the hills, *himself*, some day  
Before he died, if that might be,  
When the hills could hear what he had to say,  
And how much to say to the hills had he !

## 3.

O heavenly power of human wishes !  
For as wings to birds, and as fins to fishes,  
Are a man's desires to the soul of a man.  
'Tis by these, and by these alone, it can  
Wander at will thro' its native sphere  
Where the beauty that's far is the bliss that is near.  
Fate favour'd the wishes of this poor man.  
For the wave of the ebbing century ran  
In a sudden surge of storm at last  
Over the little spot of earth,  
Where, else, unnoticed he might have past  
To his obscure death from his obscure birth.  
And thus he, whose life had lain out of sight,  
A social nothing, the strain and swell  
Of the time's strong trouble swept into light,  
And suddenly made perceptible.

Then, as soon as noticed by those in power,  
The man was honour'd (O happy hour!)  
By the sight of his name in a Royal Decree;  
Which inform'd the world that he (poor *he*!  
Who could have fancied so strange a thing?)  
Had really and truly lived to be  
A cause of alarm to his lord the King.  
For it banish'd him to a place, he knew  
Must be in the midst of those mountains blue.  
And thus his wishes, at last, came true.

## PART III.

## 1.

Glad was our friend, when himself he found,  
In travelling trim, to the mountains bound!  
The way was long, and the road was steep,  
And, before he had got to his journey's end,  
The night was dark; and the hills asleep.  
“Aha!” thought he, “will they know their friend,  
Who is here at last? Too late to-night  
To see them, of course! They are sleeping now.  
But to-morrow, to-morrow at earliest light,  
I shall arise ere the red cock crow,  
And visit mine old friends, every one.”

## 2.

So, at dawn, he arose with the rising sun,  
And forth, as blithe as a bird, went he.  
At first he was puzzled and pain'd, to find  
All round him a field which appear'd to be  
Just like the fields he had left behind :  
A little meadow of grass, hemm'd round  
With many a little hillock and mound,  
Which hinder'd his sight from ranging far.  
“ But soon are these small hills climb'd,” he thought,  
“ And behind them, doubtless, the blue ones are,  
Where, sportively hiding, they wish to be caught.”

## 3.

Then he mounted the hillocks that rose close by,  
And thence, indeed, he beheld once more  
The old blue hills. But they were not nigh ;  
They were far, far, far away, as before.

## 4.

“ Strange !” he mused, “ yet I travell'd all day,  
Ay, and more than the half o' the night, too, post !  
And all my life I have heard folks say  
That the blue hills are but a day, at most,

From my native town. Did they err, I wonder?"  
Then, he ask'd of a traveller passing by,  
" Pray, sir, what is that country yonder?  
There, where the hills are so blue and high."  
And, when the traveller had told him the name  
Of the place where the blue hills now were seen,  
Alas, poor man ! 'twas the very same  
Where, till then, he had all his life long been :  
The country about his native town—  
His birthplace—whence he had just been banish'd.  
The blue hills *there* he had never known,  
And the blue hills *here*, which he loved, had vanish'd.

## PART IV.

## 1.

" And have I been living, then, all this while  
In a blue land—really and truly blue ?"  
The exile sigh'd with a sorrowful smile,  
" And never dream'd of it ? Can it be true ?  
Never dream'd of it ! All seem'd grey,  
Or dusty white, with a patch or two  
Of lean green grass, or raw red clay,  
To enliven the rest. But blue ? . . . blue ? . . . blue ?"

## 2.

And the man fell into a reverie.  
O'er his cerulean home a brood  
Of ethereal clouds was floating free.  
And they sign'd to him, and he understood.

## 3.

"As the waves that are clad in the azure of ocean,  
So clad in the azure of heaven are we.  
As thou movest, we move, with an unseen motion;  
And, where thou followest, there we flee.  
For the children of Never and Ever we are,  
And our home is Beyond, and our name is Afar.

"Never to us shall thy steps attain,  
Nor ever to thee may we draw nearer.  
But, if fair in thy vision our forms remain,  
Still love us, the farther we are, the dearer,  
And be thou ours, as thine we are,  
For what were the near, were it not for the far?

"Look above, and below—to the heaven, the plain!  
The low and the level, they disappear.  
The aloof and the lofty alone remain,  
And, for ever present tho' never near,  
Whilst ours are the summit, the sky, and the star,  
Still thine is the beauty of all that we are."

## 4.

All this, in his much-loved mountain-tongue,  
The man's heart, hearing it, understood.  
And he thought of the old old days, so young !  
But he spake not : only, let fall a flood  
Of passionate notes of admiration,  
Over his wan cheek silently sweeping.  
As when, in their sorrow and desolation,  
At the death of the summer, the hills are weeping.

## 5.

Then the folk about him, who knew not aught  
Of that mountain language, shook the head.  
"How he taketh his sentence to heart!" each thought.  
And "Courage ! the times must mend," they said.

## VIII.

## A WHEAT-STALK ; OR, THE NEAR.

## I.

THE cattle tinkle down the lanes,  
And there the bramble roses blow.  
From rocky haunts to reach the plains  
The rills, with shaken timbrel, go,  
Gay dancers light !  
The hills are bright  
With gleaming peaks of golden snow.

By fragrant gales in frolic play  
The floating corn's green waves are fann'd,  
And all above, broad summer day !  
And all below, bright summer land !  
And, born of each,  
Far out of reach,  
Those shining alpine spectres stand.

## II.

A world of beauty, grandeur, grace,  
Abundance, fill'd with force divine,  
No sooner doth mine eye embrace  
Than my soul hath made it mine.  
How deep, O soul,  
Thy depth 'must be,  
To hold the whole  
Of a world in thee !

## III.

But O eye, and O soul, is your thirst yet sated ?  
Or what more do ye claim for your own ?  
Must this world, at the best, be so lightly rated,  
For the sake of a better, unknown ?  
Ah, farther away than the farthest hill-top  
Do I *feel* mine own boundless emotion !  
And my heart, tho' o'erbrimm'd it may be by a drop,  
Is contented not with an ocean.

## IV.

On the blossomy lattice ledge,  
Whence, far away, I desery

The long land's light blue edge,  
With beyond it only the sky,  
From a glass half fill'd with water  
Leans an ear of wheat. 'Tis a prize  
Which erewhile my little daughter  
Brought hither with brighten'd eyes.  
Its stem, when she pluck'd it, stood  
An inch higher than she could see.  
And the wheat-field to her was a wood,  
And this wheaten stalk was a tree.  
And, as soon as her gift my fairy  
Had deign'd to confer upon me,  
With a frolicsome footstep airy,  
Off, carolling, gamboll'd she.

## v.

A little child, scarce five years old,  
And blithe as bird on bough ;  
A little maiden, bright as gold,  
And pure as new-fall'n snow.

Things seen, to her, are things unknown :  
Things near are far away :  
The neighbouring hamlet, next our own,  
As distant as Cathay !

Far things, which we nor feel, nor see,  
To her seem close and clear.

In yon blue sky God's guardian eye  
She feels, and feels it near.

What need hath she, our world should be  
So wondrous wide and far ?

Such worlds unknown are all her own,  
And every world a star !

## VI.

Why, dreaming ever, clings my gaze so fast  
To this small wheat-stem ? Whence its power to  
draw

My reflux thoughts from yonder distance vast,  
And hang them on a homely wheaten straw ?

It is that, small and homely though it be,  
This ear of wheat so homely and so small,  
Because it is so near, so near to me,

Hath size enough and power to cover all.  
It leans along full twenty leagues of land,  
And hides them with a straw. The purple hills  
Peer through its hoary panicle. The grand  
Horizon's azure orb one wheat-stem fills.

Kindly perspective ! Little things close by  
Exceed great things remote : for Nature's art  
Brings vision to a centre in the eye,  
Affection to a centre in the heart.  
And, were it not so, light and love would be  
Lost wanderers ; and the universal frame  
A heap of fragments ; and the force to see,  
The force to feel, mere force without an aim.

## VII.

O near ones, dear ones ! you, in whose right hands  
Our own rests calm ; whose faithful hearts all day  
Wide open wait till back from distant lands  
Thought, the tired traveller, wends his homeward  
way !

Helpmates and hearthmates, gladdeners of gone years,  
Tender companions of our serious days,  
Who colour with your kisses, smiles, and tears  
Life's warm web woven over wonted ways,

Young children, and old neighbours, and old friends,  
Old servants—you, whose smiling circle small  
Grows slowly smaller till at last it ends  
Where in one grave is room enough for all,

O shut the world out from the heart you cheer!

Tho' small the circle of your smiles may be,  
The world is distant, and your smiles are near.

This makes you more than all the world to me.

## IX.

## THE ASS AND THE WAGTAIL.

## 1.

THE ass began to bray.

All who heard him, by the voice of him affrighted,  
Cried, "How horrible!" and turn'd their heads away.

## 2.

The sun began to shine.

All who felt him, by the beam of him delighted,  
Looking up to him, cried fervently, "How fine!"

## 3.

An ass his feelings has.

And the feelings of this ass, alas!

Were wounded.

He said, tossing his head,  
(And the scorn his speech betray'd, loud bray'd,  
Resounded),  
"Hee! haw!  
Lighter than straw  
On the wind, fools run  
After what glitters. The taste of the day!  
Sound worth they shun,  
Their praises give to the sun's display,  
And to me give none.  
Ungrateful and frivolous fools, I say!  
For, if I were the sun, they would flatter me, they  
Who all fly me now. Yet, if I were the sun,  
What could I do for them more, I pray,  
Than, being an ass, I already have done?  
I should simply have nothing to do but to shine—  
Shine, or be seen, 'twould be all as one:  
And no great merit in that, I opine,  
If one happens to be the sun."

## 4.

A wagtail nodded his head.  
The ass was pleased. "It is plain  
*Thou* hast understood me," he said.  
The wagtail nodded again.

## 5.

“ And my voice hath a charm for *thee* ? ”

More movements of affirmation.

“ Sage bird ! I see we agree.”

(Much encouraged, continued he)

“ What senseless exaggeration

In this praise of the sun ! Nay, nay,

I am not unjust, I trust.

I admire, and enjoy, in its way,

(Tho’ the end of it all is dust)

The sun’s superficial display,

—When there’s shadow elsewhere in store.

For what is light without shadow ?

And the sun hath no shadow at all.

When he sprawls all ablaze on the meadow,

One is driven for shade to the wall.

Now, that is the fault I deplore.

True art enjoins exclusion ;

What artists call ‘ the file.’

Superabundant diffusion

Is the vice of a vulgar style.

The rich are prodigal rarely.

There’s some fire in the sun, no doubt.

But of art . . . well, seeking it fairly,

Not a symptom can I find out.

If the least little leaflet green  
Chance to cover the finest peach,  
He passes it by unseen,  
As tho' it were miles out of reach.  
Many a statue fair  
Of marble god and goddess,  
Perfectly Greek, and bare  
Of even a bit of a boddice,  
He leaves in the damp and cold  
Of their grottoes, and groves, and springs,  
To gild, in the dust, with his gold,  
The commonest insect things.  
Is that worthy work (now own !)  
For a star to whom it is given  
To saunter all day up and down,  
Staring about him, in heaven ?  
Look at me, little bird ! I am far  
From comparing my humble powers  
With those of that profligate star.  
But, to perfect them, all the twelve hours  
I've a practical occupation.  
Without it, I care not a whit  
For brilliant imagination.  
And I value not genius or wit,  
If it lacks the elaboration,  
The earnest moral tone,

And genuine consecration  
Of work—work, steadily done.  
'Tis with pride that I bear up and down  
Sacks of corn to the mill,  
And sacks of flour to the town.  
For, whilst useful to others, I still  
Feel that fairly and fully mine own  
Is the honour on me conferr'd  
Of the right to be thus employ'd.  
'Tis a privilege, little bird,  
By the idle never enjoy'd."

## 6.

At every boastful word  
The ass thus solemnly said,  
As tho' in its truth he concurr'd,  
The wagtail nodded his head.

## 7.

And the ass resumed. "No doubt,  
The fat paddock is not for me.  
The spruce garden where cabbages sprout,  
'Tis but over the wall I see.  
From the corn-bin I get not a bite :

To the pampering oat I'm a stranger,  
And the fragrant hay is quite  
Out of reach of my modest manger,  
But of no such dainties I dream.  
The thistle, that hardy relation  
Of the sickly artichoke,  
I have learn'd to know and esteem,  
And I relish my well-earn'd ration,  
Not envying sumptuous folk.  
Then, is it not hard, I ask,  
When my voice I raise  
In vigorous lays of praise,  
To celebrate Virtue's task,  
And her days  
Well spent,—yon fools, who bask  
In the sun's mere casual rays,  
All stop their ears with a cry, and fly  
My discourse at the very first minute,  
Nay, almost before I begin it,  
As if the devil were in it?  
Why do they do that, why?"

## 8.

Had this worthy ass been content,  
With the wagtail's tacit assent,

We should never have known, alas !  
What a wagtail thinks of an ass.

## 9.

But he,  
Impatient, as well he might be,  
After so long saying his say,  
Of getting to all that he said  
The self-same nod of the head  
In for ever the self-same way,  
Began to demand of his auditor  
An opinion more in detail  
Concerning the cause he was pleading for.  
Then, the wagtail hopp'd from his rail,  
And hopp'd on to a stone, that stood  
Half out of the brooklet's bed,  
And replied, " Not a word have I understood  
Of all that you just now said."

## 10.

" Not a word ?" exclaim'd the ass, much surprised,  
" Not a word of all I said and all I meant ?  
And yet, surely, if an ass may trust his eyes,  
To each word of it you nodded me assent."

## 11.

“ Nodded,” said the wagtail, “ ay !  
But nodded you assent, friend, nay !  
If I nodded ’twas because it is my way,  
And because I am a wagtail, I.  
So the sun shines, yonder, up on high,  
Just because he is the sun.  
And so you, too, as you say,  
Fetch and carry sacks all day,  
Getting thanks for it from none,  
Just because you are an ass.”

## 12.

Then the wagtail flew away,  
Thro’ the trees, across the grass.  
And this fable is done.

## X.

## THE MISANTHROPE AND THE BIRD.

ONE more Alceste, by all the world betray'd,  
And overburden'd with unnumber'd wrongs,  
The victor vices in their hell-pit leaving,  
Sought out on earth some solitary spot  
For honourable freedom. Scorn of men  
Forth drove him, and desire of desertness,  
And deep disgust of affectations fed  
On fool'd affections, with a sudden force  
Hither and thither, till he found at last  
A tract of savage, strange, uncitied land,  
Forgotten like himself. There settled he;  
Far from each false Philinthe and Celimène,  
And "love unrul'd by reason," and the troop  
Of those "great makers of great protestations"  
The world calls friends.

This hater of mankind

Walking alone along the windy wold  
One morning, spied a falcon in the wind,  
That chased a skylark. And the skylark fled  
For shelter to the bosom of the man.  
Who, muttering "Miserable little bird,  
I give thee what to me none ever gave,"  
His cloak unclasp'd, and to the bird vouchsafed  
Welcome in woe and shelter from distress.  
Then built a bowery cage; where for a while,  
With all, save freedom, that a bird can want,  
The skylark, seeming well contented, lived.

Was it the memory of a peril past,  
That made the sense of present safety sweet?  
Or gratitude for benefits received?  
Or but the waning charm of change? Alceste,  
Tho' disbelieving human kindness still,  
And earthly blessedness still disbelieving,  
Believed, at least, that he had blest this bird  
With so much bliss as he by that belief  
Still made his own, because he was a man.

So lapsed the season. Longer wax'd the days  
And the nights warmer: till a tremor ran,  
Preluding the revival of the year,

Along the leafless boughs. And, ere it pass'd,  
Lo you ! like love, that changes life, all round,  
Above, beneath, the Spring was everywhere ;  
Troubling the sleep of Nature with mad hopes.  
All things of joy and beauty, long repress,  
Broke out in revel, riotously sure  
Of May's delirious promise. From whose mirth,  
Pelted with buds, the frowning Winter wrapp'd  
His white robe round him, like a minister  
Disgraced, that from the uprisen people runs,  
And fled, barefooted ; muttering, " Motley fools,  
That fling a saucy triumph in the face  
Of fleeting Power, sing ! dance ! pavilion all  
The tipsy tops of yonder swaggering trees  
With tassell'd fringe ! on every wanton puff  
Of passing wind swing out your banners blithe !  
Carpet with squander'd broidery, green and gold,  
The dull land deckt for your audacious march !  
Break ope earth's hidden treasures ! 'twirl and toss  
Your silly tinkling timbrels that proclaim  
A world's subversion ! Fools, *I shall return.*"

Then, for the skies the skylark yearn'd : and, mad  
With memories which the magic of the Spring  
Had changed to hopes, he could no comfort find  
In any corner of his corbell'd cage.

But, food by day and sleep by night refusing,  
He sent forth little plaintive cries, and beat  
With petulant beak and breast the ozier bars  
Of his unvalued lattice. This, Alceste  
Beheld, compassionately vexed ; and sigh'd,  
"Thou longest for lost liberty, alas !  
The snares of earth, the storms of heaven forgetting,  
The chill wind chattering on the rainy wold,  
And the hawk hovering in blue ambush high.  
A wandering odour on the wakeful night,  
A warmer breeze thro' budded thickets breaking,  
Suffice thee to efface all sufferings past,  
Insensate ! and thou flutterest to regain  
Thy persecuting freedom. Out on time !  
Doth Memory carve the records of Mischance  
With such a careless or a clumsy hand  
That, ere the lazy creeping ivy-twine  
Hath time to lace her latest epitaph,  
It fades away ? Ah, were her warning words  
But graved on granite, the insensible stone  
Would keep unblunted all their biting truths :  
But she confides them to the tender stuff  
That hearts are made of ; and the hot blood there,  
Born for betrayal, heals old hurts in haste,  
Lest the scarr'd nerve, grown callous, miss the smart  
Of sufferings yet in store. Go, silly bird !

Thou know'st not how that folk, self-styled elect,  
Which deem'd itself Heaven's favourite upon earth,  
Tho' in the desert half a hundred years  
It linger'd looking for the Promised Land,  
Is at this hour a wanderer as of old,  
The byword of the nations! Get thee gone,  
Truster in promises!" He oped the cage,  
And forth, in vain admonisht, flew the bird.

Some few days after, near the self-same spot  
Where, in the autumn of the bygone year  
Alceste had saved it from its falcon foe,  
He found the skylark dead. Desuétude  
Of self-exertion, caused by comfort got  
Without an effort, had relax'd the strength,  
And dull'd the craft, which Freedom needs to bear  
The bruising buffets of Necessity.  
Unshelter'd cold and foodless hunger found  
No friend in liberty. A little heap  
Of frozen feathers in the mountain grass  
Was all that rested of a vain desire  
Wreckt on a sea of promise.

Seeing this,

"Heart-breaking Liberty!" Alceste exclaim'd,  
"If we be strong, with stronger than ourselves

Thou dost confront us : and, if weak we be,  
In vain thy gifts thou givest us. Yet ah,  
Safe-shelter'd from thy harsh embrace, we droop,  
And find no joy wherever thou art not."

## XI.

## FORTUNE AND HER FOLLOWERS.

## PART I.

Two friends in search of Fortune once set out  
Together. And, for many and many a day,  
Up hill, down dale, and all the land about,  
Ever in search of Fortune wander'd they,  
Till both were tired. Then one sat down, and sigh'd,  
“ Of finding Fortune I begin to doubt,  
And fear we may have taken the wrong way.  
How say you, friend ? ” The other one replied,  
“ It seems, indeed, that we have gone astray,  
For here of Fortune is no trace, in truth.  
But there stands one, may haply tell us yet  
Which side to turn. Look yonder ! ” 'Twas a youth  
Who in the crossway stood where two roads met,  
And by the bridle held in either hand  
A horse. Himself was looking eagerly

To right and left, both ways across the land,  
And seem'd to wait for some one. "Holla, boy!  
Hast seen Dame Fortune pass this way?" "'Twas she  
That bade me here remain (for my employ  
Is to obey her) until I should see  
Two travellers coming, who would ask for her.  
And, by the question ye have asked of me,  
My charge, I doubt not, doth to you refer.  
To whom, as soon as seen, her orders were  
That I should give these steeds, which saddled be  
For you to mount. One steed to each."—"O rare  
Good Fortune!" cried the grateful twain. "Say how  
May we our benefactress find? and where?"  
"Nay," said the lad, "that's more, sirs, than I know.  
She bade me say her way lies here and there,  
And it is yours to find her." Now, the two  
(Because they could not both together fare  
By different ways, and had no indication  
On which side Fortune waited) thereupon  
Reluctantly resolved on separation,  
Each following Fortune his own way, alone.  
For at the point where they took horse, the road  
Split into two, which from the self-same spot  
Led right and left; and not a sign-post show'd  
Which was the road to Fortune, which was not.

## PART II.

The first of the twain then gallop'd amain  
Till he came to the nearest town.  
And there he was fain to throw up the rein  
At the first inn door, and get down.  
For his horse was tired ; as he was, too ;  
And of rest and food they were both in need,  
Ere they could their journey again pursue.  
So there they waited to rest and feed.  
But, when horse and man had their strength renew'd,  
They started again, and again pursued  
The chase ; tho' in vain ; for thus ever again,  
As from city to city they journey'd fast,  
With each fresh fatigue there was need, for the twain,  
Of a fresh repose and a fresh repast ;  
Till the horse fell lame of a double sprain,  
And the man had no money left at last.  
To prison he must have gone, no doubt,  
If his host (surmising he might do worse,  
When the man had his reckoning all run out)  
Had not taken in payment the founder'd horse.  
“ Ah, scurvy Fortune ! ” the traveller said,  
“ This is what comes at the last, I see,”  
(And the poor wretch ruefully shook his head)

“ Of running about in search of thee.  
Here am I, ruin'd, and half-starved dead !  
And what is henceforth to become of me ? ”  
The host heard this, and “ Both board and bed  
You may earn, if you will. Rest here,” said he.  
“ Who works for his bread hath a right to be fed.  
And that's better than starving, or stealing, at least.  
Take service with me. And endeavour to be  
Of some use now to this broken-down beast  
You have used so ill.” Tho' it be but stale,  
Sweeter, no doubt, than the bread of the jail  
Is the bread that is earn'd. To his evil case  
Our traveller had no choice but submit  
With a grieving heart and a grateful face,  
And, bitterly earning his daily bit  
Of bread, and his nightly truss of straw  
(For the moneyless man must work, if he can,  
And to jail, if he can't, and that is the law)  
The master-turn'd-servant now served, alas,  
The brute that had brought him to this sad pass.

## PART III.

Time fled. To the door of that inn one day,  
Came, at nightfall, a carriage with horses four.

Wealthy and healthy, good-humour'd and gay,  
Did its occupant look. Never counting the score,  
For his supper he order'd the choicest and best  
That mine host could procure for so noble a guest ;  
And, as soon as the landlord had shown him his room,  
Enquired if he happen'd to know of a lad  
He could recommend as a stable groom.  
Said mine host, "Tho' to lose him, your worship, I'm  
sad,  
There's a poor fellow here I can well recommend."  
Then for Fortune's unfortunate follower (glad  
To get rid of him thus) the rogue hasten'd to send.  
For he thought to himself "What a lucky chance,  
To oblige a man of such station  
By the much-desired deliverance  
From that beggar's prolong'd starvation!"  
But fancy the face of the rascal, when  
To his wonder he witness'd those two men  
(His great rich guest and his stable boy)  
With a cry of recognition and joy  
Rush into the arms of one another,  
As the first exclaim'd, "O friend! O brother!  
Have I found thee at last? I have sought thee long.  
And how changed, dear friend! Hast thou suffer'd  
wrong?"  
Mine host would have spoken. But here the door  
Was shut in his face, and he heard no more.

## PART IV.

What he might have heard, had his wealthy guest  
Not lock'd him out that he should not hear,  
Was (after the poor man's joy was express'd  
At tasting once more in his life good cheer,  
And feeling his hand by a good friend press'd)  
The admiring question, "But tell me, pray,  
Since *you* have discover'd it, favour'd one,  
The way to Fortune." "I know no way,"  
The other replied, "tho' to Fortune alone  
My wealth I owe." "By what lucky chance?  
A lottery?—or an inheritance?"  
"The latter. That horse which she gave me  
Is dead long since, and I am his heir."  
"The heir of a horse, friend? How can that be?  
The same, to look at, our two steeds were.  
Mine's now but a damaged beast, as you see.  
How happens it yours was a millionaire?"  
"Listen. I gallop'd at first, like you;  
But, perceiving, after a day or two,  
That I lost my labour, and, what was worse,  
Without filling my belly had emptied my purse,  
I began to consider the shortest way  
Of simply getting from day to day.

Now, for this mine own two legs would do  
Just as well as my horse's four ; and so  
' I'll kill him,' I thought, ' and the skin of the beast  
Will make me, to still jog on, at least  
A dozen stout pairs of shoes ; and they  
Will cost me nothing for corn or hay !'  
So said, so done. My horse I slew.  
His flesh for meat to the butcher I sold,  
And his tail to a Pacha who, having but two,  
Had set his heart on a third. With the gold  
Which I got thereby, a barrow I bought  
To carry my merchandise about.  
For out of the hide of my horse I had wrought  
More shoes than I needed, and all were stout.  
These others I sold, and increased my store.  
And when my stock of leather was out,  
As the folk were still eager to purchase more,  
Said I again to myself, ' No doubt  
It were better for me, so long as my door  
The people with purse in hand importune,  
Daily to purchase my wares by the score,  
If, instead of still running after Fortune,  
And so wearing mine own shoes into holes,  
I stay where I am, and provide stout soles  
For the feet of the fools who to find her fare  
By all manner of ways, a motley host.

Since founder'd horses are not so rare  
But what I may get them at no great cost.'  
It is thus that at last, having beaten dead,  
Without riding one of them, horse upon horse,  
I find myself where I am, at the head  
Of a flourishing business. Leather, of course.  
So, in search of Fortune not needing to spend  
My days as of old, when we sought her together,  
I set out, as you see, to seek after my friend.  
And, not having lost anything, even leather,  
Both the one and the other I now find mine.  
So here's to Fortune! and pass me the wine.  
For what's mine is yours: and we'll share it now,  
Old friend, as to seek it of yore we toil'd  
Side by side." Then the poor man cried,  
As his lean cheek flush'd with a grateful glow,  
"I thank thee, Fortune! for now I see  
That the best of thy gifts thou hast saved for me,  
A friend whom thy favours have not spoil'd!"

## EPILOGUE

(INSTEAD OF A MORAL).

The Fabulist's a pedant, whose profession  
Is, with the plainest most precise expression,

To preach in all ways, unto all mankind,  
“Be wise, and good!” Well for him, if we find  
Those speaking contrasts in his text, which spare  
The preacher’s pains, and of themselves declare  
The preacher’s purpose! Well, if, on his way,  
One with its load, the other with its lay,  
Emmet and grasshopper do chance to pass,  
Or royal lion and ridiculous ass,  
Or crafty fox and over-credulous crow!  
For contrasts, clear as these, have but to show  
Their faces to us; and, as soon as seen,  
All’s understood. Moreover, men, I ween,  
Without resentment, nay, with laughter glad,  
First see their foibles when they see them clad  
In fur and feathers, or in hoof and hide.  
But ah! not always doth kind Chance provide  
Such fortunate occurrences to him  
Who pries not only into corners dim  
For secret treasures, but in field and street  
Questions whatever he may chance to meet;  
And often for an answer waits in vain,  
Or gets one he is puzzled to explain.  
So aid me, Gentle Reader! Staff in hand,  
And nose in air, I roam thro’ Fable Land;  
And sniff the passing wind, and tap the ground,  
Ready to seize on all that’s to be found;

Keen as a sportsman who, with bag and gun,  
In search of game goes beating, one by one,  
The bushes all. My prey escapes me not.  
But this time there falls only to my shot.  
A moral tale—too moral thro' and thro'  
It may be, for a moral tail thereto.  
Naught do I scorn, but all that comes I greet.  
And, even as swallows, when the air is sweet,  
And Spring's abroad, flit swiftly to and fro,  
Come and then vanish ere a man cries, "Lo!"  
So flit these fables, a wing-woven mist,  
Before the fancy of the fabulist.  
This came, as came the others; on light wing  
Swiftly appearing, swiftly vanishing,  
'Twixt two unknowns. I caught it as it past.  
"O swallow, swallow, since I hold thee fast,  
Tell me thy secret ere I let thee go!"  
Thus ever hath it been my wont to do  
With these light-wingèd visitants from far,  
And sometimes long delay'd their answers are.  
But this was in a hurry to be gone,  
And answer'd quickly, "Secret have I none.  
What can I tell thee which thou dost not see?  
Two wings hath Fortune also given to me,  
Which now are fluttering to be far away.  
Loose me, and let me use them while I may!"

Surprised, I loosed the bird. Away it flew.  
And with it fled away the moral too :  
Dropping this counsel, as I watch'd it flit  
Like Fortune's self—not to run after it.

## XII.

## COMPOSURE.

## 1.

SEAWARD from east to west a river roll'd,  
Majestic as the sun whose course it follow'd,  
Filling with liquid quiet of clear cold  
The depths its husht waves hollow'd.

## 2.

No wrinkle ruffled that serene expanse ;  
Till, perchd atiptoe on its placid path,  
A tiny rock the surface pierced by chance,  
Whereat it foam'd with wrath.

## 3.

Over the depths, indifferent, smooth of pace,  
The current with continuous calm had crost.  
Yet lo, a little pinscratch in the face,  
All its repose was lost !

## XIII.

## SIC ITUR.

## 1.

BEHOLD yon sleep-soft phantom opaline  
(That seems "such stuff as dreams are made of") rise  
And wane, as dreams do from awakening eyne,  
Above the woodman's hut. Like one that tries  
Uncertain paths, from prison precincts flying,  
The frighten'd spectre pauses, turns, and stoops ;  
Confused, unused to freedom ; faint, fast dying.  
The breath of liberty descends on it  
Fierce as a brigand from his ambush swoops,  
And, cowering, see the brow-beat craven flit  
Along the tops of the tumultuous trees !  
There, pallid patches of its shroud, all torn,  
Float, feebly tossing on the fitful breeze  
That heaves about these forest haunts forlorn,  
And with low mocking laughter murmurs, "Lost !"

As fades in film the desultory smoke.  
But would ye learn what life hath lived this ghost ?  
Listen ! for now the wind is in the oak,  
Its weary chronicler.

## 2.

But yesterday  
'Twas the fairest child of the Forest green,  
From whose waving arms she now wanes away,  
A bodiless goblin. Safe, unseen,  
The sleek-limb'd hart in his slumber lay  
At the foot of her, gladden'd with grassy shade  
When the glaring wave of the noon wash'd clean  
All shadow away from the open glade.  
And the birds, that had dream'd in the far-off lands  
Of a life to be lived in her leafy boughs,  
And had travell'd by night in seafaring bands  
Over the ocean to meet and carouse  
Here in their fair predestined home,  
Blithe music made from her dancing dome.  
And the squirrel, that bird who, instead of wings,  
Hath a spirit within him that soars and springs,  
Set her fluttering spray in a tremble sweet  
As the tender tremour that mounts and moves  
Through the limbs of a maiden whose pulses beat

'Neath the first light touch of a hand she loves.  
And the wind, that gossip so indiscreet  
(The confidant of the unconfiding)  
Ever at eve, when the high day's heat  
Was calm'd and cool'd, thro' her branches gliding,  
Whisper'd low to the listening wood  
Secrets, echo'd from tree to tree,  
Yet by none of his listeners understood ;  
For the pleasure alone, as it seem'd to be,  
Of betraying the trust received from many,  
Without wrong done to the faith of any.

## 3.

Art thou weary of wandering  
About a noisy world alone ?  
With plumage soil'd and broken wing  
Fly to the Forest, weary one !  
For there is the City of Refuge fair,  
Where Silence and Repose,  
Two lovers banisht the earth elsewhere,  
Dwell safe from a world of foes.  
But unloved was the Forest's restful lot  
By the Forest's child who had wander'd not.  
The far-off clouds as they wander'd by  
She watch'd, and felt with a wishful sigh,

“ I would that a wandering cloud were I !  
To follow the sun o’er the azure deep,  
And catch the last kiss of the dying day,  
And bear in my bosom the moon asleep !  
With the winds of summer to sport and play,  
With the snows of winter from steep to steep,  
Wrapt in a mystical mantle grey,  
To mount, and pause o’er the world, and peep  
At my pictured self in the pools, and stray  
Over wide waters and over broad downs,  
Windy sea-beaches and turreted towns,  
Clothing myself in all hues that be,  
And taking all forms that seem fair to me  
To dream, and create what I dream of, too ;  
Float, a white feather thro’ fathomless blue ;  
Fly, a wing’d dragon, with plumage of flame  
Lurid and purple, strange news to proclaim  
Of the Storm that is plotting to levy wild war  
On the pines, whose tall people his progress bar.  
Then bathe, a bright naiad, at eve, bosom bare,  
All rosy with rapture, in wells of warm air  
By the waves of the sunset bequeath’d as they sink,  
For the baths of my beauty, on Ocean’s brink ;  
And thro’ moonlight and midnight to melt out of sight  
In the depths of the heavens like a dream of delight  
Ah ! dream of delight that dissolves even now !

For, fasten'd here to the earth below,  
My fingers clutch but the sordid ground  
To whose chill lap is my sad life bound.  
Lost in the crowd of my neighbours, far  
Lonelier thus than the lonely are !  
Divining all, and beholding naught  
Save that which escapeth as soon as sought ;  
Seeing only the clouds sail by,  
Hearing only the stray winds sigh,  
Embracing those that, embraced in vain,  
With a careless chirrup depart again.  
Wretchedest life ! ah, when will it end ? ”

## 4.

It ended then. Death came to befriend  
Life's longings. A stroke of the hatchet . . . one—  
Two—three . . . and that unloved life was done.  
With a sigh, then a groan, did the tree sink down,  
Beating the air with her branches. Blown  
About her, leaflets like drops of blood  
Sprinkled the sod. On the torn soil stood  
But a stump deform'd, like a block that awaits  
Some victim dragg'd from his dungeon gates  
There to perish. Nought else remain'd  
Of the life that had been by itself disdain'd.

## 5.

Woodsmen and headsmen—doomsmen all—  
Are quick at their work. 'Tis a word and a blow.  
And that word is a word by the axe let fall,  
Stopping life's prate. For from ages ago  
Between iron and life is a rancour old,  
And the iron emergeth again and again  
From the earth's black bowels, his birthplace cold,  
Only to bite, and shed blood, or give pain.

## 6.

What did the woodmen want? No more  
Than fuel to boil their broth. Not so  
The iron, whose rancorous soul was sore  
For the want of a victim to fell and lay low.  
And for ever, as long as the years roll by,  
Shall such fellowships in another's woe  
(The alliance of Spite with Stupidity)  
Be able, as this was, to overthrow  
Something beautiful, something high,  
Or something that sought to be both,  
And seem'd born for a fairer fate  
Than to boil Vulgarity's daily broth  
On the fire that is fuell'd by Hate.

## 7.

The Tree to the clouds did aspire :  
The Axe for destruction panted :  
The Woodmen wanted to fuel their fire :  
And they all of them have what they wanted.

## 8.

In ghastly cloud the ghost of the dead tree,  
Finding an issue from the roof, arose  
And, o'er its native forest floating free,  
Beheld that ancient City of Repose  
Where it had lived and dream'd. Accomplisht now  
Both dream and life ! It knew itself a cloud.  
Fain to its former brotherhood below  
It would have whisper'd from its phantom shroud  
What phantoms feel, and only phantoms know.  
But their yet green and living leaves grew grey,  
Paled by its spectral presence as it pass'd,  
And shuddering shrank. Slowly it waned away  
Into the void, invisible at last !  
Yet scattering, as it faded, downward flakes  
Of sullen soot that o'er the forest fell  
Like lost illusions on a heart that aches  
When Hope departs and Memory sighs farewell.

## 9.

Follow, O follow with regretful gaze  
Those waning orbs that float and fade between  
The earth and heaven, i' the void where nothing stays,  
Clouding heaven's azure, shadowing earth's green !  
Desires disbodied.   Phantoms.   Promises,  
Fraudulent promises which Life hath given  
And Death pretends to keep.   Souls of dead days,  
Hopes of lost hours: that fade 'twixt earth and heaven !  
We rake the ashes that you leave behind,  
The sole realities that rest of you,  
And there still beggar'd Memory seeks to find  
The gold false Hope to feed his sorceries threw.  
But even these, some day, the hankering wind  
Will scatter in the void, between the blue  
We take for heaven, the green that once was earth. .  
Death's silent answers to the cries of birth !

## XIV.

## DIOGENES OR ALEXANDER ?

## 1.

BoHEMIAN born, but by laborious art  
To perfect polish smooth'd in every part,  
And form'd to shine with frigid grace, acquired  
From that hard lucid style that's most admired,  
A Water-Bottle of the last design  
Glitter'd among the flowers and dishes fine  
That brightly blush'd and proudly beam'd upon  
The festive board of some Amphitrion.

## 2.

New to the place, he gazed in pure delight  
All round the snowy Saxon damask, bright  
With golden garniture, and florid piles,  
And porcelain shepherds peeping with pert smiles

From Arcadies of Sèvres. Flatter'd pride  
Beam'd out of all his features, as he sigh'd,  
"O Form! Form! thou art everything! Nor yet  
(Beam-bathed and glory-girt) can I regret  
That long, laborious, painful preparation  
Which form'd me fit for this exalted station.  
Yes, Form is everything. Severe and hard  
Its acquisition: but what rare reward  
Awaits the acquirer! Common flint was I,  
Who, thanks to Form, now glitter radiantly  
As any gem. O triumph! not in vain  
(*Per aspera ad astra!*) was the pain  
That polish'd, point by point, and line by line,  
This well-consider'd perfect form of mine!"

## 3.

But, whilst he mused self-laudatory thus,  
Ye gods! what sudden object scandalous  
And sinister confronts his casual glance?  
A valet pour'd the sparkling wine of France:  
And in the bottle, gross, ungainly, black,  
From which it foam'd he recognised, alack,  
A long-forgotten cousin. Sore distress  
For fear this low connection should be guess'd,  
The delicate Decanter sigh'd aghast,

“ How hath that blackguard turn’d up here at last ?  
 Whence comes he ? Talk of Form, indeed ! O fie,  
 The clumsy sloven ! what vulgarity !  
 He hath not even wash’d his face, I’ll swear,  
 Nor brush’d his coat. ’Tis cobwebb’d. What an air  
 Of back-slum unacknowledgeable life ! ”

4.

If one had struck him with a carving-knife,  
 No greater shock could have been dealt thereby  
 To that fine sense of strict propriety  
 Which made our poor friend, even when in a passion,  
 The mould of Form and water-glass of Fashion.  
 Still greater wax’d the wonder of it all,  
 When neither host nor guests one word let fall  
 Of passing reprobation or disgust,  
 As more such shabby upstarts forward thrust  
 Their necks, and spouted. To a pitch it grew  
 When, after each had pour’d libations new,  
 In ladies’ eyes a deeper starlight danced,  
 More briskly round the rippling converse glanced,  
 Or sparkled off in spray of laughter light,  
 The wise grown witty, and the dull grown bright.  
 And, when at last the spritely feast was done,  
 And from the board its merry guests all gone,

(The portly Banker-Prince ; the last Prose-Poet,  
New to the world though he profess'd to know it ;  
The Wit, who had out-dined a generation  
Of other wits, who dined for reputation ;  
The famous Traveller, fresh from Timbuctoo ;  
The last survivor left of Waterloo ;  
The year's five Beauties, each in rival trim)  
Not one of all of them had noticed him,  
Tho' keen observers were they, all and each.

## 5.

Left to himself (as on a desert beach  
A limpet by an ebb'd-out tide) among  
The silent sideboard's stationary throng  
Of glassy things, he spied an old Carafe ;  
Crackt, and so out of service ; but still safe  
From the sad fate of commoner crackt glass,  
Since sole survivor of a set that was  
Beauteous and precious in its time, tho' now  
No more the fashion. And, relating how  
His feelings had been shockt, "Dear Madam, deign,"  
Said he, "this contradiction to explain."

## 6.

"Alas!" the Old Beauty answer'd with a sigh,  
"Young friend, none better can do that than I.

O pleasant *petits soupers* of the past !  
 Wild, wicked, witty evenings, gone so fast !  
 How unremember'd are their mirth and grace !  
 'Twas there the rogue was in his natural place,  
 Whose presence disconcerted you to-night.  
 'Twas there he reign'd, the soul of all delight  
 All laughter. Ah, and those fair dames were sly !  
 We pour'd them out our pure propriety  
 In vain. For form's sake, they vouchsafed three sips,  
 Returning ever with their pretty lips  
 To his pert fountain. Ay, and then, O child,  
 What fun, what frolic, what adventures wild,  
 What scandals I have seen, and I could tell !  
 And all this rascal's doing. Well, child, well,  
 Give him his due. I said, and still I say,  
 The rogue's a rogue, but in a sort of a way  
 There's something good in him." The old Carafe,  
 Looking like a diaphanous giraffe,  
 (The *nec plus ultra* of all disproportion  
 'Twixt neck and body—a sedate distortion)  
 Said this with such an air as ladies old  
 Assume when they break off a tale half told,  
 But leave the purport of it plain enough,  
 Clinching their last word with a pinch of snuff.

## 7.

“ But,” said the novice, growing thoughtful, “ why,  
Dear madam, is it, then, that you and I,  
Whose form is perfect, lack the charm which still  
With such sweet influence doth inform and fill  
What flows from him who hath no form at all ? ”  
“ Hey ! ” said the old one, “ Man is what I call  
The greatest paradox in all creation,  
And I can give no other explanation.  
One thing he thinks, and does another thing :  
Makes money, saves it, and, when saved, doth fling  
His money out o’ window : ne’er hath found  
His best friends out till they lay underground :  
Only consults his health when it is gone :  
And if he values virtue, I, for one,  
Believe he does so simply for the sake  
Of vice, which virtue doth by contrast make  
More to his taste. For all his folly flows  
From that one drop of wisdom Heaven bestows  
In mockery on him for no use at all.  
He boasts his elevation in his fall ;  
And still, the lower that he lies, the more  
He deems his natural place was high before.  
Height measures he by depth, seeks peace in strife,  
And calls all this the Poetry of Life.”

## 8.

“ But,” cried the young one, “ what has that to do  
With our low cousin ? and how, even so,  
Does he contrive to make such a sensation ? ”  
“ Child, ’tis a sort of natural inspiration  
Which men, who persecute by turns and pet it,  
Ignore first, then o’er-rate, and then forget it.  
’Tis not worth getting, if it could be got.  
As, just investigate the woeful lot  
Of those to whom ’tis given, and you’ll find.  
One bright spark wandering on a midnight wind !  
Our friend’s a being, call him what you will,  
Of genius ; who has simply turn’d out ill,  
As genius generally does. Do you  
So envy him ? That’s more than you would do,  
Knew you but how, till just an hour before  
His recent triumph, which so soon was o’er,  
The poor wretch fared. A dingy outcast he,  
Who unobserved, till chance his lot set free,  
Lay dark in silence, solitude, and cold.  
Such was his past. His future ? Oh, soon told !  
How fares he now ? Thro’ yonder window peep,  
You’ll see him lying on a loathsome heap  
Of stable ordures in the base back-yard.  
And if his fall, which must have hurt him hard,

Hath not yet shatter'd him, some scavenger,  
Raking among the unsavoury refuse there  
In search of fallen and forgotten things,  
Where blue flies buzz and the rank nettle springs,  
Will haply filch him from his filthy lair.  
What next? In some grim garret, Heaven knows where,  
Methinks I see our miserable friend  
Serving to hold the bit of candle-end  
By whose sick, smoky, feeble flame he'll see  
Some other genius, badly off as he,  
Pouring on paper the portentous proem  
Of some sublime unpurchasable poem.  
Another kind of wine-flask, full of froth  
Most evanescent! And the fate of both  
Is, trust me, miserably much the same.  
A life's discomfort for a moment's fame!  
Our lot is better. Not much use are we;  
But folks, at least respect us—as you see."

## 9.

The young Decanter mused; nor made reply,  
Save by an inward meditative sigh;  
Which we translate, as well as we are able,  
By the famed query which preludes this fable.

## XV.

## A LEGEND.

“Die Tugend erwartet ihren Lohn in jener Welt; die Klugheit hofft ihn in dieser; das Genie weder in dieser noch in jener: es ist sein eigener Lohn.” \*—SCHOPENHAUER, ii. 260.

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It was the eve of the day  
Which for the sake of St. Peter  
Christendom honours : and he,  
Being the Porter of Heaven,  
Pray'd St. Thomas to take  
Charge of Heaven's gate for awhile ;  
Since on the morrow himself  
Needs must be present in Rome,  
There to receive, and reward,  
Christendom's praise and its pence.

\* Virtue awaits its reward in the next world; Ability in this; Genius in neither. Genius is its own reward.

Prudent St. Thomas, however,  
Is the most scrupulous, most  
Conscientious of saints.  
Conscientious, because  
He, the Celestial Empiric,  
Even in high metaphysics  
Follows the physical method,  
Experimental, exact ;  
Judging of things for himself,  
Never dismissing a doubt  
Till he hath probed it and proved.

Therefore St. Thomas refused,  
Firmly refused, to take charge  
Of the Celestial Gate,  
(Lest he should thereby incur  
Charge, too, of error—the Church  
Holds for a damnable sin)  
Save on condition that first  
Peter should point to him out  
Whom, without risk of himself  
Being thereby taken in,  
He into Heaven might take.

Peter, tho' firm as a rock,  
Knows that a point may be gain'd

Best by not arguing it.

“What!” he replied, “only that?”

Good! since you will, be it so!

Brother, between you and me,

’Tis but a sinecure. Still,

Better prevention than cure.

Put on your hat. We have time.”

Safe, then, he fasten’d the Gate,

Popp’d in his pocket the keys,

Hail’d the first cloud that came by,

Into it jump’d with St. Thomas,

And in a trice the Apostles

Travell’d together to town.

“Now,” said St. Peter, “observe!

Over their heads who must die

Ere the night’s done, you’ll perceive

Trembling a little blue star.”

“Ay,” said the other, and lo!

Everywhere round him he saw

Hanging o’er hundreds of heads

Tremulous little blue stars..

Heeding not any of these,

Peter, however, went on.

Thomas was fain to ask why.

“ Oh,” said the Porter of Heaven,  
“ These are no cattle of ours.  
Look at them closer, you’ll see ! ”

Then did St. Thomas perceive  
Station’d in charge of them all  
Pert little sentinel imps  
Clad in the colours of Hell.

Groaning, he made with his staff  
Many a sign of the cross ;  
Which by those sentries satanic  
Was, with a deference mock,  
Duly saluted, as on  
Through the iniquitous town  
Pass’d the two Saints with a sigh.

Reaching the suburb, where sin,  
Wedded to misery, tastes  
Something of hell upon earth,  
There in a hovel they saw,  
Stretch’d on a sack of foul rags  
Feebly, an old poor man.  
Over the old man’s head  
Trembled a little blue star.

“ Brother, bear him in mind.  
He is,” sigh’d Peter, “ alas,  
The only one of them all  
Whom, ere the morrow, in Heaven  
Thou shalt receive to his rest.  
All that was not in our gift  
He upon earth has refused,  
Trusting to us for his all.  
All we can give him, we owe.

“ Therefore the soul of this man,  
When it to Heaven returns  
Pure as from Heaven it came,  
Bear thou, asleep on thy bosom,  
Into the meadow of God,  
Sweet with the innocent breath  
Breathed by the children who died  
Pure in the moment of birth.

“ Threescore and ten are the years  
God to the life of this man  
Gave : and to him they have given  
Poverty only, and pain.  
Now, in the moment of death,  
Nothing of him do they leave  
Which is not innocent, sweet,

Simple, and pure as the soul  
Breathed by the Giver of Life  
Into the babe that is born.  
Truly he hath his reward.  
Now let us go."

But "O stay!  
Still," said St. Thomas, "I see  
Two men yonder, and lo!  
Hovering over their heads  
Tremble two little blue stars.  
Yet can I nowhere perceive  
Sentry satanic or guard  
Set for the souls of those men.  
Surely for them there is hope?

"Yonder magnificent mansion!  
Is he the lord of it, he  
Who, while the death-star unheeded  
Brightens his serious forehead,  
Seems to be pondering, planning,  
And counting the chances of life?  
Life, for the will and the purpose,  
Ay, and the lion-like power,  
Pent in the brain that makes broad  
That man's mountainous brow,

Such life, sure, hath a value  
Not to be lost in the tomb ? ”

“ He ? ” with contemptuous accent,  
Shrugging his shoulders, the old  
Much-experienced Apostle  
Mutter’d in answer, “ he  
Knows how to shift for himself.  
Let him. His wits are his own.  
All that on earth was to get  
This man hath ask’d for and gotten.  
Nothing owe we to this man.

“ Ay, ’tis a notable head !  
What will he do with it ? Brother,  
That is not Heaven’s affair.  
Tell him as much when he comes  
Knocking to-night at the Gate.

“ Oh, he will come, never doubt !  
Come where there’s aught to be got.  
Eagerly ask for it too.  
Such is the way with them all.  
Well, let him get what he can,  
So as he gets it himself.  
Tell him we owe it him not.  
Doubtless he hath his reward.”

“Good!” said St. Thomas, “but wait!  
What of the other? Behold,  
There is he, standing alone  
High on the brow of the hill,  
Wrapt in a glory that streams  
Over his form and his face  
Fair from the fall of the sun.

“Pale is his forehead and pure,  
Deep is the fathomless eye  
Fixt on that source of a light  
Fading away from its gaze.  
Solemn and sweet is the face,  
Saintly the mien of that man,  
Even as one that regards  
Calmly the coming of calm.”

Peter had paused. And he too  
Gazed on the man, and was still.  
“Well?” whisper’d Thomas, “Reply!  
Him, at the least, I admit?”  
Silently shaking his head,  
Peter still answer’d him not.

“What!” cried the questioning Saint,  
“Heaven, is it grudged to a guest

Who in his soul, as I think,  
Hath it already ? who seems  
One of the few, the elect,  
Sign'd by the sigil of God ? ”

Still, without answering, still  
Lost in his own meditations,  
Silently shaking his head,  
Peter vouchsafed in reply  
Only a negative nod.

“ Speak ! ” cried St. Thomas. “ Explain !  
Porter of Heaven, to him  
Must I not open the Gate ? ”

“ No. ” — “ What, refuse him admittance ? ”  
“ No. ” — “ In the name, then, of patience,  
What must I do, Brother Saint ?  
Thomas my name is, not Job. ”

Sighingly Peter replied,  
“ Brother, the man will not come. ”  
“ Ah, ” with a gesture of joy  
Thomas exclaim'd, “ he will live ? ”

“ Brother, to-night he will die.  
Die, when yon sun shall have set.

Die, and the life he hath lived,  
Beauteous and bright as the sun,  
Shall, with the sun, pass away.  
All hath that man in himself:  
All, and he knows what he hath:  
Knows it, and asks for no more.  
He is himself his reward."

"Nay, then, what is he, my Brother?  
Name me that forehead, those eyes!"

Then did the holy Apostle  
Stretch, with a gesture fraternal,  
Forth to the man on the mountain  
Solemnly his right hand:  
Waving a mute benediction  
Whilst, in the ear of the Saint  
Who to him listen'd in wonder,  
Softly he whisper'd these words:  
Words which all Nature receiving  
Echo'd with answering thrills:

"That which hath all in itself,  
All without any condition,  
All without any restriction,  
What can it want or demand?

Having within it, and feeling,  
Comprehending, enjoying  
All things, nothing is left it,  
Nothing, to ask or to get.

“ Three men are call'd out of life.  
One shall be welcomed above,  
One be lamented below.  
Pure was the life of the first,  
Potent the life of the second.  
Each was an effort rewarded :  
One its reward hath in Heaven,  
One its reward upon Earth.

“ Not so the life of the third.  
There is no effort in this,  
Therefore for this no reward.

“ Man, it was, named the creation.  
What was the name of it, think you,  
Ere man himself had a name ?  
Here is the Thought that created  
Finding itself in creation,  
Feeling and knowing itself,  
And in that knowledge rejoicing.  
GENIUS men call it on earth.”

## XVI.

## THE RAINPOOL.

## PRELUDE.

## 1.

THE water flows, and it never stops.

And the water is many, although it is one :  
One made up of innumerable drops,  
Each with a life to itself alone.

And the life of them all is the life of the sea ;  
Which is but a drop no longer single,

When, being socially-minded, he

With his brother drops doth move and mingle.

For, fling but a poodle in it, and lo !

When he shakes himself, as a dog will do,  
How many and merry the drops reappear !

Yet each, meanwhile, tho' you were not able  
To see him, was there, in his own small sphere,  
Busy and brisk. Let who will give ear

To this (what is it?) that drops from me,  
Dropt, to find—whatever that be—

Its fate in the world: a tale—a fable—  
A truth perchance—but I know not what.  
And, if my fable share the lot  
Of its little heroes, and fall forgot,  
What matter? It is but a drop in the ocean,  
As they were once. With an unseen motion  
Hovering hid in the happy air,  
Social wanderers next they were.  
Till, lured through the azure heats aloft  
By the wooing sun, so strong, yet soft,  
And then caught by the cold of the upper heaven,  
To the realms afar,  
Where the polar star  
Hath his palace of ice, these drops were driven.  
There, chill'd by the power  
Of the north again,  
In a resonant shower  
Of riotous rain  
A whirlwind chased them over the main;  
Till, mad with mirth  
To have reach'd the earth,  
They leapt, when their need of escape was sorest,  
Down on a Pomeranian forest;  
Rattled his wrinkled oak-leaves shrill,  
And made his deep glens hiss and thrill.

## 2.

Some of them fell in the soft moss under,  
And lay there a-quiver with glad bright wonder :  
Till, forced to shun the importunate sun,  
Thro' the spongy soil their way they worm'd  
Into a Secret Society, form'd  
Of operative springs. By these  
With welcome somewhat cold and chary,  
Tho' waxing warmer by degrees,  
As merely members honorary  
They were elected. But, in course  
Of time, their due probation o'er,  
Each to the rank of a mineral source  
Promotion gain'd ; and gather'd store  
Of mineral salt and mineral ore ;  
Purgative, stimulant, sedative, tonic ;  
Then, travelling about on their own account  
With sulphur, or iron, or acid carbonic,  
They founded many a famous fount,  
Made their fortunes, and all fared well,  
At Carlsbad, Vichy, or Aix la Chapelle.

## 3.

Some of them fell on the mountain flanks ;  
Leapt into the first fresh torrent they found,

And, down to the valley in vigorous ranks  
Gambolling, sprang with a buoyant bound  
Over the wheel of the water-mill;  
Whirl'd the reluctant monster round,  
And set themselves with a blithe good will  
To the sawing of wood: then wander'd, still  
And serious, into the lower sluices;  
Whence, putting their strength to social uses,  
They carried down to the busy town  
Many a barge-load's heavy weight  
Of flour, and timber, and chalk, and slate,  
And . . . But you must not expect me to state  
Every detail, or my breath would fail  
Before I am come to the end of my tale.  
Suffice it to say, that day by day  
They did their duty, work'd their way,  
In this world's business took their share,  
And earn'd their wages, whatever those were.

## 4.

But the others? They whose lot  
Lured me first to tell this story?  
Undiscover'd drops, that got  
Neither gain, nor grace, nor glory,  
How fared they?

## 5.

In a showery spray,  
Brisk as emmets, and as many,  
Fast they speeded, unsuspecting,  
Down each wrinkle, chink, and cranny  
Of the tree they chanced on. "This,"  
Thought they all, nor thought amiss,  
"Is the road most expeditious."  
Ah, most expeditious—yes!  
To what end, tho' ? Who can guess,  
Who declare, the end of any  
Road that earthly travellers wend ?  
Even the end of this, my fable,  
I to tell you am not able  
Until I have reach'd the end.

## PART I.

That tree's brown roots, like bronzen snakes that bind  
Some Fury's formidable brows, had wrought,  
And rampired deep from reach of sun or wind,  
A dismal pit, where those poor drops were caught.

The cloud was emptied, and the storm was gone;  
The heavens all stainless, and the forest still.  
The water, wondering, to itself, alone,  
Whisper'd, and sigh'd with a regretful thrill,

“ Was birth a snare, then ? and is life a lie ?  
And is this all that we were born to be ?  
Where are the waves, and where the winds ? Ah, why,  
Why have we loved and lost them ? What are we ?

“ What is the meaning of this passion, fill'd  
With pining memories of the infinite tide,  
If here forever, straighten'd, stain'd, and still'd  
Thus to a stagnant pool, we must abide ? ”

There was no answer—save the want of one.  
Silence, obscurity, and solitude !  
Scarcely a gleam from the leaf-hinder'd sun,  
Thro' the dense umbrage of that gloomy wood :

Scarcely a sound, save of the fleeting roe,  
Or the faint flutter of some vagrant bird :  
No change : no choice : no happy come-and-go :  
Naught to be seen, and little to be heard.

But, in their season, swarms of stinging flies,  
That claim'd that lonesome lakelet for their own,

There laid white egglets ; whence anon did rise  
Little red worms that wriggled up and down.

And, once, a headlong acorn, misbegotten,  
Splash to the bottom of the pool did drop,  
Like a dead body, blacken'd, swell'd, wax'd rotten,  
Burst, and again upfloated to the top.

Also, an old toad hobbled to the brink,  
And squatted there ; so still, she might be dead,  
Save that her small black eyes at times did wink,  
And, winking, sparkle in her spotty head.

PART II.

For months and months that melancholy toad  
(Wrapt in profound and sombre reverie)  
Her loathsome presence on the place bestow'd.  
Eftsoons ! sole mistress of the place was she.

For neither buck nor doe did ever come,  
Nor any bird, to drink of that dark pool.  
But gnats around it swarm'd with sullen hum  
At noontide : and at evening, in the cool,

Leaflets, above it, babbled to the breeze,  
Babbling about some business of their own ;

A vague monotonous murmur, hard to seize,  
Of many voices, in a speech unknown,

Full of mistrust and mystery; nor aught  
The little pool could understand of it.  
Deep in its own dark bosom a dull thought,  
Brightening at moments ere it faded, lit

With vexing visions of a grandeur gone  
The water's stagnant gloom. In dreams again  
It heard the thunderous billows bursting on  
The wind-blown beaches of the roaring main;

And, fool'd by fancy, felt, or seem'd to feel,  
Once more the rapture of a wandering life,  
The chase of cloud and bird, of sail and keel,  
Thro' sea and sky,—bright rest or buoyant strife!

Its *will*, at least, was not unworthy yet  
To roam the rosy coral reefs, and roll  
Fantastic shells with briny dewdrops wet,  
Or brilliant seabuds, in a sparkling shoal,

Up slumbrous bays of sunny-bosom'd sands,  
Where plummy palm-groves slope to purple seas  
Far in the light of lonesome faëry lands.  
And it recall'd with shuddering ecstasies

A memory of white stars, that did whilome,  
Down from the heaven of the high summer night,  
Trembling all over with pure passion, come  
To bathe in its clear calm their splendours white ;  
  
And winds, wild horsemen of the boisterous North,  
Who from their skyey coursers leapt, to seize  
And in tumultuous dances whirl it forth  
Over the tumbling and bewilder'd seas.

## PART III.

And now ? Was all this a delirium, dream'd  
By famisht Fancy ? Had the flimsy hum  
Of flies and gnats the sea's deep music seem'd ?  
And was that acorn, floating in the scum,  
  
That bloated acorn, right when she derided  
What to her hollow maggot-eaten husk  
The miserable pool with sighs confided  
Of those bright thoughts which thrill'd it in the dusk ?  
  
The squelch'd nut counsell'd the reluctant water  
To learn life's lesson of the loathsome toad,

“ A sorceress she ! in all the wood none greater :  
Hath roam'd the world thro', and knows many a  
road.

“ She'll tell you, nothing is without a reason.  
The flies and gnats (perchance the old toad too)  
Enjoy themselves here in the summer season,  
And doubtless fare the better, friend, for you.

“ Reflect on that, and be not so dejected.  
Contentment, truly, is the best of things.  
We cannot all be all that we expected.  
I, too, have had mine own imaginings.

“ And I myself, when I was green and glowing,”  
(The hollow nut said,) “ I myself, in truth,  
Was plagued with whims and wishes. For my growing  
The heavens then seem'd not high enough ! 'Twas  
youth

“ And the green sickness. ‘ Why, my pretty Miss,’  
Whisper'd the old toad, ‘ dream brisk youth away ?’  
And introduced me, as you see, to this  
Good lusty playfellow, that's ever gay.”

The while she spake, up popp'd, with beaded eyes,  
A fat white worm, self-confident and vain,

Stared at the world with impudent surprise,  
And slunk into the hollow nut again.

“For these, then, am I here?” dismay’d thereat,  
The wretched pool complain’d. “For these alone?  
Toadstool and toad, and worm, and fly, and gnat?  
All for their profit, nothing for mine own?”

And its face darken’d, and more dismal grew  
Its turbid being; and a filthy weed  
Over its film’d and stagnant surface drew  
Nets to catch sportive spiders; and a breed

Of brassy-headed, spongy-bodied buds  
Pimpled the slippery banks of that black pool;  
And slugs and snails, dull lazy brotherhoods,  
Lived at their ease there in the gloom and cool.

#### PART IV.

The Summer smoulder’d into ashes red  
And dim upon the boughs. Sad Autumn sigh’d,  
And, sighing, shook them till they rose and fled.  
Translucent grew the wood’s grey roofage wide.

A whirlwind came, and swept the branches bare,  
And in between them widen'd the blue night.  
The night was clear and chill. The wintry air  
Was thrilling; and the stars shone thro' it bright.

Then that forlorn and sullen pool began  
To feel as tho' it were the mystic breath  
Of mighty spirits approaching. Rapture ran,  
Sharp as fierce anguish, thro' the shuddering sheath

By weary Wont and sordid Custom spun  
To hold and hide keen instincts long suppress,  
Which now, all tremulously, one by one,  
Leapt to wild life within the water's breast.

For far above it (far, and yet not far,  
Swift-changing to a nearness yet not near)  
A sudden glory smote it. And a star,  
Fall'n in its depths, with throbbing splendour clear

Kindled them all. And the star whisper'd there,  
"Child of Eternity, despair not thou!  
Unenvying, tho' despised, let others wear  
The flaunting robe, and deck the boastful brow

"With the brief diadems of summer days,  
Soon scatter'd by the wind. Do thou resign

To those that seek it Earth's near-sighted praise,  
Born to reflect Heaven's distances divine !

“ Measure thy being's depth by the sublime  
Celestial and immeasurable height  
Of what is imaged in it. Here, in Time,  
(Brief if it be, tho' brief yet infinite)

“ Their hour of consciousness arrives at last  
To all the children of Eternity,  
Once always, if once only. Thou, too, hast  
Thy destined hour. I will return to thee.

“ Despair not.” And the image of the star,  
Slowly receding from their surface, left  
The conscious waters comforted, as are  
Spirits which, self-discover'd, tho' bereft

Of earthly converse, have held commune high  
Once, if once only, with the heavens above.  
Then, while the clear cold of the wintry sky  
Grew slowly solid thro' the frost-bound grove,

Slowly those waters cover'd themselves o'er  
With crystal pall ; whose purifying power  
Cleansed all it calm'd and shelter'd till once more  
That promist star return. To each his hour !

## XVII.

## CONTAGION.

A BROOKLET, born above a mountain moor,  
Down to the level of the world below  
Perforce descending, past a dyer's door

Foul with pollution thro' the plain did flow.  
The waters of this brooklet from on high,  
Still pure and splendid as the spotless snow,

Beneath them could their sunken sisters spy  
All soil'd and spoil'd, as when spilt wine doth stain  
A pot-house floor. Whereat they brawld out "Fie!"

A traveller, who had climb'd the hill with pain,  
And knew the world beneath it far and wide,  
Smiled at the inexperienced disdain

Of those immaculate waters, and replied,  
"Wait, pretty fools, until down there you get.  
Had they not pass'd the dyer's door, undyed  
And white as you would be those waters yet."

## XVIII.

## AURORA CLAIR.

*“Arma habent quia iram habent.”\**

(The Fabulist offers this fabulous lay  
To the Dons that he knows. No Don Juans are they.)

## 1.

SHYLY shunning the sound and glare  
Of the tumultuous thoroughfare,  
By black back streets where the moonless sky  
In a sallow sluice 'twixt the housetops high  
Flow'd, silent save for the distant drum  
Of the throbbing town with its human hum,  
Its feet that flutter, and wheels that whirl,  
Aurora Clair, the weaving-girl,  
Walk'd home to her father's house; where thin

\* *Δια το θυμον εχειν οπλον εχει*—They have arms because they have anger.—Aristotle.

Weak ragged skirts of the town let in  
Long rural patches thro' lanes obscure.

## 2.

Aurora Clair was a maiden pure  
Of body and soul, as the Mother Maid  
To whom this motherless maiden pray'd  
At morn and eve in her chapel small  
Of the great grey church, that hath room for all,  
The rich and the poor, and the old and young,  
The whole year round, and the whole day long.  
And in virgin blossom as nobly fair  
Of form and face was Aurora Clair  
From head to foot as a queen should be,  
Tho' only a poor man's child was she ;  
Who early and late, with good cheer unchild,  
Work'd for bread as her father did.  
She at her loom, where she wove and spun  
The quaintest creation under the sun,  
Wild men with crowns and wild beasts with horns,  
Pards, griffins, lions, and unicorns :  
He with his chisel and graving-knife,  
Whereby he wrought to a wondrous life  
Frame and panel, that under his hand  
Burst into blossoms of faëry-land.

## 3.

'Twas the night of the City Saint's Feast Day.  
By the side of Aurora all the way  
(Proud of his tenth year turn'd) with joy  
Ran, merrily carolling, rosy Roy,  
Her garrulous, gold-hair'd, bright boy-brother.  
The city was swarming, the suburbs were still.  
The boy and the maiden took care of each other.  
There was nobody else to take care of them. Ill  
(To that saint's dishonour) at home in bed  
Their father was lying. Their mother lay chill  
In the churchyard grass with a cross at her head.

## 4.

Beauty, Innocence, Feebleness !  
In risk and peril these roam by night  
Thro' a great town's populous wilderness.  
As Aurora found : when with footstep light  
The children, to shorten their homeward way,  
Cross'd into the great suburban square ;  
Which, emptied now of its idlers, lay  
In a vacant monotony, all as bare  
Of an image responsive to ear or eye  
As the silent brain of the fool ; save where

Some Ædile (encouraging art thereby)  
Had set up the statue, in bronze bran-new,  
Of that famous darling of chivalry,  
Who neither fear nor reproach e'er knew.  
For which reason perchance, or to save its pence,  
The City's Municipal Providence  
Vouchsafed not even one lamp, which might  
With its humble halo have served to mark  
The spot, now dark and deserted quite,  
Where the sworded statue stood in the dark.

## 5.

There, a voice, no Bayard's, as by went she,  
The virgin scared. 'Twas the vulgar voice  
Of a burly Don Juan who, bold and free,  
With speech to the point, and more plain than choice,  
His prey pursued. And the night was late,  
The spot deserted, the neighbourhood lone.  
Fierce indignation, by fear made great,  
Wild cries for help that were heard by none,  
Tears, struggles, and prayers,—what avail were they  
From the prowler's clutch to release his prey?

## 6.

Then Aurora Clair, in her extreme need,  
Lifting her looks to the midnight sky

Saw there (as tho' Heaven had taken heed,  
And sent him to answer her helpless cry)  
Sworded and helm'd, on his stately steed,  
The form of the gallantest Christian knight  
Of the whole world's gallantest Christian nation,  
With his right arm raised as in act to smite.  
And, "O Bayard," she cried with the inspiration  
Of a sudden hope which that welcome sight  
Had awaked in her maiden imagination,  
"O Bayard, thou champion of chivalry, thou  
Fair saviour of innocence, save me now!"

## 7.

Hoarse laughter greeted the maiden's prayer.  
Not much for statues Don Juans care.  
"Too rusty the good knight's sword is grown,"  
Her tormentor mock'd, as he touch'd his own.  
"But thy champion, pretty one, prithee invite  
To supper with us at the tavern to-night."

## 8.

Scarce had the insolent jest been utter'd  
Ere the laugh changed into a howl of pain  
And bewilder'd wrath, as the hot blood sputter'd,  
Cooling that boisterous boaster's brain.

The arms that were dragging Aurora Clair  
Dropp'd ; and, as tho' at a god's command,  
The brute fell flat on the flintstone there,  
Struck in the dark by an unseen hand.

## 9.

A miracle ! so did Aurora deem ;  
Whose only lore being folk-lore old  
Had fill'd her with faith in full many a dream  
Of faëry and magic and knighthood bold.  
And she thought that her champion, arm'd in bronze,  
Had really return'd at her invocation  
From Elysium, eager to add for the nonce  
A fresh renown to his reputation  
By rescuing thus from a roisterous churl  
That of a poor little weaving-girl.

## 10.

A miracle ? Truly Aurora was right,  
And moreover a miracle, no mere dream,  
But a fact of miraculous meaning and might,  
A dictating flash of the Will Supreme.  
For who is it stands at the maiden's side ?  
What second superlative apparition ?  
Her own child-brother : but glorified

By the transfiguring intuition  
(Never to noble emotion denied)  
Of a sudden supreme self-recognition :  
Which hath left its flash in the eyes' deep light  
And its pulse in the nostril panting wide,  
And its mereiless might in the 'marble-white  
Firm lips lock'd fast as a fort defied,  
And fists by triumphant intention tight  
Clench'd with fate in their fingers fixt.  
'Tis an image of awe and of beauty mixt.  
For the form of the child is a child's no more,  
But half-god's, hero's, or saint's, of yore ;  
Which its own supernatural inward heat  
To a supernatural height hath raised.  
Even so on Goliath dead at his feet  
Might an infant David have gazed.

## 11.

One moment, swift and yet infinite,  
Had reveal'd to Roy, as by lightning-light,  
A danger for her whose defender strong  
He believed himself, with a pride proved true :  
The infernal approach of a nameless wrong :  
A deed to prohibit, a deed to do.  
Not a moment's doubt ! not a questioning fear !

Once the duty known, are the means not clear?  
Or, the foe being there, is the weapon not here?

## 12.

The weapon! what weapon? This child, half-clad,  
Weak, ignorant—what were the means it had,  
What weapon sought it, what weapon found,  
For smiting, bathed in his blood, to the ground  
That gay cavalier, whose sword at his side  
In the starlight shone with a saucy pride?

## 13.

Doubter! learn, then, and understand  
There is everywhere, ever, a stone at hand  
For the arm that is seeking the means of death.  
A philosopher said, and this fabulist saith,  
Nature adapts to the use of her lord  
The implements that she forges.\* Sword  
And shield lack never where'er there be  
A soldier ready to use them. He

\* ταδ' ὀργανα πρὸς τὸ ἐργον ἢ φύσις ποιεῖ, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ ἐργον πρὸς  
τὰ ὀργανα.—For Nature accommodates the instruments to the  
work, not the work to the instruments.—Arist.: *De Part.*  
*Animal*, lib. iv. cap. 12.

Who, having a cause for which to fight,  
Hath also courage and will to smite,  
Finds waiting for him in pebble or reed  
Just such a weapon as serves his need.

## 14.

Statues we, too, have seen and known.  
Irreproachable their renown !  
Perfectly polisht in every part,  
Models were they of immaculate art.  
Noble the names of them, lofty the mien,  
Uncontested the fame serene.  
Each every pace of his Pegasus knew,  
And could pass with applause thro' a classic review  
Upon galloping dactyle or spondee sedate,  
With the requisite word at the regular rate.  
And so, to the pure statuesque in time  
Promoted, there they repose sublime.

## 15.

Well, and good ! But, O statues fair,  
Why so deaf to our desperate prayer ?  
Draw your swords and defend us, pray !  
Cannot you hear what the challengers say ?

Quick, to the rescue ! and, undefeated,  
Save that importunate maid, maltreated !  
Much by her modern admirers bold,  
Perishing Poësy ! Ah ! still cold  
And stolid, you stand on your pedestals tall  
Solemn, but solemnly helpless all.  
Whilst they woo her, pursue her, would fain enjoy her,  
But shame her at best, and at worst destroy her.  
Feel and be men, then ! The cause of our harm is  
That hearts *sine ira* leave hands *sine armis*.

## XIX.

## LOST TREASURES.

## PART I.

It was the splendid winter-tide.  
And all the land was thrilling white,  
And all the air was still and bright  
With a solemn and songless sunshine wide,  
Whose gorgeous uncongenial light  
Harden'd whatever it glorified.

And while that glory was streaming amber  
Into a childhood-haunted chamber,  
A child, at play by the lattice-sill,  
Where daily the redbreasts begging came,  
Noticed a glittering icicle  
That flash'd in the sun like a frozen flame.

So, plucking it off, he seized and put it  
Into a box of gilded paper.  
There, to be treasured for ever, shut it,  
Danced about it with shout and caper,  
And then, as a child will do, forgot it.  
For suddenly under the lattice roll'd  
A music of cymbal and trumpet blent.  
And, oh merry and brave it was to behold  
The soldiers below, who in scarlet and gold  
Marching blithe to the music went.

And after the soldiers, cleaving the cold  
Slantwise, shot like a falling arrow,  
And perch'd on the sill of the lattice, a bold,  
Bright-eyed, sharp-beak'd, hungry sparrow ;  
Claiming, with saucy, sidelong head,  
His accustom'd alms of a crumb of bread,  
Tho' to get what he ask'd he would not stop,  
But off, with a pert, impatient hop,  
Went twittering over the roof instead.

Next follow'd far more than a man can mention  
Of in-door claims on a child's attention.  
And at last 'twas a whip to whip the top,  
And "Oh, where is Grandfather? 'tis he must find  
one!"

Then away in a hurry the small feet trot,  
Yet pause : for that icicle, first forgot,  
And then remember'd all in a minute,  
It were surely a pity to leave behind one.

So the treasure-box, with the treasure in it,  
Their tiny treasurer carries away.  
But ah, what sorrowful change is this  
In the box where safely the bright gem lay  
Erewhile, a secretly-beaming bliss  
To beautify many a winter's day ?

For, drop by drop, is the drench'd box dripping,  
And the gilded paper is all undone,  
And, away in a shower of warm tears slipping,  
The deceitful treasure is well-nigh gone.

So, weeping too, with the woeful story  
(In a passion of grief unreconciled  
For the lost delight of a vanisht glory)  
To the old man hastens the troubled child.

## PART II.

Lone by the old hearth was the old man sitting.  
He, too, a treasure-box had on his knee ;

And slowly, slowly, like sad snow-flakes flitting  
Down from the weak boughs of a wither'd tree,  
Fell from his tremulous fingers, wet with tears,  
Into the embers of the old hearth's fire,  
Wan leaves of paper yellow'd by long years :  
Letters, that once were treasures.

The Grandsire

Welcomed the infant with a kind, faint smile.  
The burning letters, black and wrinkled, rose  
Along the gusty flue ; and there awhile  
(Like one who, doubtful of the way he goes,  
Lingers and hesitates) along the dark  
They hover'd and delay'd their ghostly flight,  
Thin sable veils wherein a restless spark  
Yet trembled!—and then pass'd from human sight.

How oft had human eyes in days of yore  
Above them beam'd, and with what tender light !  
Wherefore, O wherefore, had those eyes no more  
Upon them gazed for many a heedless year ?  
Was not the record which those eyes had read  
With such bright rapture in each blissful tear  
Still writ in the same letters, which still said  
The self-same words ? Ah ! why not now, as then,  
With the same power to brighten those changed eyes ?

Why should such looks such letters meet again  
As strangers? each to each a sad surprise!  
“How pale,” the eyes unto the letters said,  
“And wan, and weak, and yellow are ye grown!”  
And to the eyes the letters, “Why so red  
About the rims, and wrinkled? Eyes unknown,  
Nor ever seen before, to us ye seem,  
Save for a something in the depths of you  
Familiar to us, like a life-like dream  
So well remember’d it almost seems true!”

The grandchild weeps upon the grandsire’s knee,  
And babbles of his treasure fled away.  
The old man listens to him patiently,  
And tells the child, as tho’ great news were they,  
Old tales which well the child already knows,  
And smoothes his tumbled curls, and comforts him.  
The winter day is darkening to its close.  
On the old hearth the dying fire grows dim.

### PART III.

The child upon the old man’s breast was sleeping,  
The old man stiller than the sleeping child!

Then slowly, softly, near and nearer creeping  
From book-shelves dark, and dusty papers piled,  
Old thoughts, old memories of the days of old,  
Which lurk'd about that old room everywhere,  
Hidden in many a curtain's quiet fold,  
Panel, or picture-frame, or carven chair,  
All silent, in the silence, one by one,  
Came from between the long-unlookt-at leaves  
Of old books ; rose up from the old hearthstone ;  
Descended from the old roof's oaken eaves ;  
Laid spectral hand in hand by twos and threes,  
And then by tens and twenties ; circled dim  
Around the old man, on whose tranquil knees  
Still slept the infant ; and, saluting him,  
The eldest whisper'd, " Dost thou know us not ?  
Many are we who come to take farewell.  
For all departs at last. Ay, even the thought  
Of what hath been. Sunbeam and icicle,  
Childhood and age ! The joys of childhood perish  
Before the heats of manhood ; manhood's heats  
Before the chills of age. Whate'er ye cherish,  
As whatsoe'er ye suffer, fades and fleets.  
What goes not with the heat, goes with the cold.  
For all that comes, goes also. What ye call  
Life, is no more than dyings manifold.  
All changes, all departs, all ends. All, all ! "

## XX.

## CHASSÉ-CROISÉ.

A MAN, together in one cage, immured  
A lion and a dog. The dog endured  
Long while a world of drear indignities  
From that grim housemate ; who, without the least  
Consideration for his fellow beast,  
Stretch'd himself out at ease  
In the best places ; while the other lay  
Crouch'd in a little corner the whole day,  
And gnaw'd, with furtive tooth, the bones disdain'd  
By his strong neighbour, surfeited ; dry bones  
Gnaw'd bare already. With reproachful moans  
The poor dog oft complain'd,  
And of the human master of his fate  
Besought release from wretchedness too great  
For even canine flesh and blood to bear.  
But all in vain. His master heard him not,

Or, hearing, heedless of the creature's lot,

To change it had no care.

Doubtless far weightier cares weigh'd on him. They

Whose daily business is but to obey

Must not be suffer'd to exact from those

Who haply rule the house,—or rule the State,—

Attention to their feelings or their fate.

For what, if some get blows,

While some are pusht on pleasantly? They are

Tools to be used, with no particular

Consideration for the private feeling

Of either implement—though this, rough-handled,

Mops the drench'd flint—that, delicately dandled,

Brushes the gilded ceiling,

Fares soft, rests oft, and wears a plummy crown;

Whilst, soon worn out, the drudging mop is thrown

To rot, at last, behind the scullery door.

Little do those that use them care, I ween,

For broom or mop, who care but to sweep clean

The ceiling and the floor.

And, first of all—as touching this dog's lot;

In all the house there was no other spot

Half so convenient as that lion's cage

Wherein to stow the dog. In the next place,

The lion served to give a sort of grace

To the whole house, engage

Attention to it, and make its master's name  
Conspicuous: for which reason, it became

The dignity of that illustrious brute  
(Tho', save in this respect, and this alone,  
The brute was an entirely useless one,

And mischievous to boot)

That join'd to him should be some other creature  
Of meaner mark, and more familiar feature,

To show to best advantage all his strength,  
And size, and strangeness, and ferocity.

And so the poor dog had no choice, but try

To bear his fate. At length

The lord of both on a far journey went;

Leaving, together in the same cage pent,

The lion and the dog behind him there.

And, in the absence of their master, few,

If any, gave much notice to the two;

Who did but poorly fare.

But when the man from his long pilgrimage

Return'd at last, in that neglected cage

A wondrous change he marvell'd much to find.

For now it was the lion, lean and tame,

That in a corner crouch'd with surly shame,

And, dog-like, cringed and whined;

Whilst, stretch'd at stately length in the best place,

The dog, with pride becoming better'd case,

(His paw upon a bone) the warning range  
Of his suspicious and retentive teeth  
Did oft, with supercilious growl, unsheathe.  
What caused so great a change ?

## MORAL.

There's something of a cur that lurks conceal'd  
In every lion : something unreveal'd

In every dog of spirit leonine.  
Long battle with the overbearing power  
Of a brute's senseless selfishness—each hour

That stretch'd the strengthening line  
Of wrongs resisted,—had at last aroused  
The something of a lion, nature housed

In the dog's heart, and made the dog at length  
Superior to superiority

Wasted for want of aught its strength to try  
Save one of weaker strength :

As power, meanwhile, by sheer abuse of power,  
Degenerating daily low and lower,

Had dragg'd the lion's nature from above,  
Down to that coward something of a cur  
Which lurks in every lion's character,

Like lust, subdued, in love.

'Tis thus that many a small and feeble state,  
Striving for justice, hath at last grown great :

Whilst many an empire opulent and vast,  
Down from the eminence, its selfishness  
Disgraces, sinking slow to less and less,  
Dwindles and dies at last.

## XXI.

## A PHILOSOPHER.

## PART I.

## 1.

ON a breezy knoll, neither hill nor plain,  
But a chance-begotten child of the twain,  
In a land of ridges and flats forlorn  
Where none went by, save the wind in the corn,  
Living the life that beseemeth age  
A hermit had chosen his hermitage.

## 2.

Chosen, it may be, is hardly the word  
For a place of abode by fate conferr'd.  
But there he was, and he held his ground.  
The spot was lone : and the traveller rarely  
Paused, as he pass'd it, to gaze around  
On the long low fields where the billowy barley

Waved and whiten'd under the wind ;  
Or the wolds above where the wandering sheep  
Slept and brouzed, and were sure to find  
Nothing to do but to brouze and sleep.

## 3.

Yet, wherever she makes herself at home,  
Thought fixes the centre of all creation.  
And therefore this hermit, having become  
A philosopher, had from his contemplation  
Wrought for himself, as the years roll'd by,  
A little philosophical system ;  
Which explain'd to his own satisfaction the why  
And the how he was there ; and so served to assist him  
To accept and support with a heart heroic  
His lot in life. Tho', for my part, I,  
Not having in me the soul of a stoic,  
Had that lot been mine should have surely sought  
To exchange it for any less drear and lonely.  
For, like the giants Don Quixote fought,  
This sage was, in fact, but a windmill only.

## 4.

A windmill only ? Monotonous hold  
Of weary silence and chill neglect !

Yet a pilgrim tribe hath paid from of old  
To this hermit homage of high respect.  
For a little people there is, that lives  
In the woods and fields, and is loved by all  
For the songs it sings, and the joy it gives.  
And this sweet folk, whose bodies are small  
But whose hearts are large, with religious awe  
That weather-beaten windmill saw.

## 5.

The birds! their ways of living are known,  
But who is it knows their ways of thinking?  
'Tis true, and 'tis pity, 'tis true, I own,  
But truth is truth and forbids all shrinking,  
The birds, whatever themselves may call  
Their flighty notions, are heathens quite.  
Heathens, and not monotheists at all!  
But this, tho' of course it is far from right,  
Is yet a defect which they compensate  
By adoring a number of gods so great  
That perchance it comes in the end to the same,  
And adoration suffers no loss.  
They adore the sun for his friendly flame,  
And the freshening shadow that cools the moss,  
They adore the bushes, and banks, and brooks,

And the ruin'd towers we men abandon,  
And even the low thatch'd eaves, whose nooks  
Are as shrines for their household gods to stand on.

## 6.

What wonder, then, if a windmill be  
A demigod to the birds? For who  
But knoweth that four great wings hath he,  
Whilst the biggest of birds hath only two?  
And a demigod may as well, I aver,  
Be a demi-bird as a demi-man.  
They deem'd him the bird of Jupiter,  
And this tradition among them ran:  
One summer morning Father Jove  
Created the Windmill, wanting a fan  
To cool his Palace Olympian;  
And forbade the celestial bird to move  
From the perch assign'd him by Jove's high will.  
But, alas for the Windmill! he fell in love,  
Madly in love with the Watermill:  
Who then dwelt upon earth. And one dark night,  
"Jove never will find me out," thought he,  
As earthward slyly he wing'd his flight  
To visit the Watermill; where she,  
Like a maiden demure, was sitting beside  
Her spinning-wheel. Doth she mourn for him?

For he, having chosen (not to be spied)  
A night when the Moon was wrapt up to the rim,  
And, seeing her not as he pass'd on the sly,  
Broke one of her horns with a flap of his wing.  
The Moon to Jove complain'd, and thereby  
All the gods got a gust of the thing,  
And the Windmill was banish'd to earth, but still  
Far away from the Watermill.  
That is the reason he looks so sad.  
And the Moon keeps turning her face in heaven,  
To hide the scar which that night she had  
From the Windmill's wing. He is unforgiven.

## 7.

Now, albeit their legends admit variation  
As to what the Windmill hath been or may be,  
In the birds' universal estimation  
Some sort of a half-bird-god is he.  
And, if for naught else, they would still adore him,  
Because of the grains of corn he strews,  
For *their* sakes, over the threshold before him ;  
Where they hold high feast, when they get good news  
Of the Miller's mystical visitations.  
For is it not Hermes, the herald of Jove,  
Bringing the Windmill his daily rations  
Of ambrosia sent by the gods above?

## PART II.

## 1.

One day, when the sacred feast was done,  
And the others all flown, there remain'd behind  
A certain Sparrow, the only one  
Of the birds, be it said, whose habit of mind,  
From haunting so much the haunts of men,  
Hath taken a sceptical turn. And, when  
He perceived that his fellows were gone, said he  
To the Windmill, "Listen! It dupes not me,  
Thy silence stern, nor thine aspect lonely.  
I know thee. Thou art but a windmill only.  
Yet, altho' unduped, I applaud thy plan  
For being a god. Nay, both will and can  
Widely encourage the worship of thee,  
But I first cry shares, and must have my due.  
I am in the secret, as thou may'st see,  
Prithee take me into the profit too.  
By the profit I mean the sanctuary.  
Thou hast in thy belly good store of grain.  
A bargain's a bargain. Why be chary?  
Come! let me in. It will be to thy gain.  
I shall keep my counsel, and thine, be sure;  
And behave as the priest who is up to the trick

Of the oracle bravely contrived to allure  
His flock to the shrine, where their offerings stick.  
Moreover, the more grains *I* devour,  
The fewer for *thee* to grind into flour."

## 2.

"Grains, and flour!" the Windmill cried,  
"What would'st thou, poor little scavenger?"  
But "Marry come up!" the Sparrow replied,  
"No bad names, if you please, old sir!  
You are but a windmill. That we know."

## 3.

The Windmill mutter'd, "I care not how  
Nor what I appear to thy bounded ken.  
If thy foolishly-twittering folk suppose  
That I, too, am a sort of a bird, what then?  
Innocent ornithomorphism! Those  
Small souls can soar thro' the realm of infinity  
To no loftier thought: tho' a mystic sense,  
Guessing in me some part of divinity,  
Gives them a glimpse of the truth immense.  
Men, that are made of a coarser kind,  
Careless concerning the causes of things,  
In the simple effects of them seek but to find

Their own advantage, and use my wings  
For the sake of the grain which I grant they grind ;  
Then pick up, and prize as precious stuff,  
The dust which the voyager, voyaging  
To a goal sublime, in his haste shakes off  
From the sole of his foot. But this flour, this thing  
That you prattle about, I regard with disdain."

## 4.

Said the Sparrow, flapping a saucy wing,  
" What are you there for, if not to grind grain ? "

## 5.

The Windmill sullenly groan'd, " Go to !  
Know'st thou the Wind ? " " I should think I do !  
Who knows not the Wind ? " said the bird. " The Wind,  
That terrible traveller, hungry and blind,  
Whose joy is to ravage and overthrow  
Whatever is lofty and great ! I know  
That he pass'd erewhile o'er mine own house-roof,  
Thatch'd so thick I had thought it proof  
To the wildest weathers that worry the sky,  
Yet he shatter'd it all as he pass'd by.  
And I know not yet if I now shall find  
The means to rebuild " . . .

## 6.

“ Whence cometh the Wind ? ”

Interrupted the Windmill, stern.

“ How should I know ? ” said the Sparrow. “ Turn  
And look out for thyself when he comes thy way.  
And I care not, I, if at home he’d stay,  
And not turn other folks out of their home.”

## 7.

Said the Windmill, “ Learn whence the Wind doth  
come !

The Wind, whose sublime and beneficent nature  
Thou fearest, foolish and feeble creature,  
Is the brave benefactor of earth and sky.  
But who is it giveth him motion ? I.  
And the Wind, at whose whisper the anchor’d ship  
Thrills like a bride to her bridegroom’s lip,  
Were it not for me would, in slothful sleep,  
Leave not the lap of the languid deep.  
But a single stroke of my sturdy wing  
Startles him out of his slumbering.  
A second speeds him away through space,  
And, fearing a third, he hurries apace  
Over earth and thro’ heaven, headlong hurl’d  
By the strength made mine for the good of the world.”

## 8.

The Sparrow could scarce believe his ears.  
After a silence long and perplext  
“ Friend,” quoth he, “ since it now appears  
From all you say (and who knows what next  
You will bid us believe, audacious prophet,)  
That the wind is waked by your mighty will,  
Give me, prithee, a specimen of it.  
See ! not a grass-blade dips on the hill,  
Nor a leaf on the lone thorn trees above it.  
The time is propitious. Lift but an arm,  
Or wave but a wing, and the wild wind charm.”

## 9.

“ The moment is not yet come,” unstirr’d  
The other replied, and undisconcerted.  
“ And when will it come ?” said the sceptic bird.  
“ I know not when. It can *not* be averted.  
Nor yet commanded,” the Windmill averr’d.  
“ When the inner voice I hear in me,  
Prompt obedience I render to it.  
But I cannot provoke it. The voice is free  
As the inspiration of seer or poet.

Thro' all my being, I know not how,  
But I *feel* the mystic impulse run  
Which mingles my life (this much I know)  
With the life of the mighty world. The sun,  
The moon, and stars, and the lands and seas,—  
In all, doth the Spirit of Nature lurk.  
And I, whose soul is made one with these,  
By that Spirit am waked for my wondrous work.  
He liveth in all, and he liveth in me,  
That unseen Spirit : and only he  
Knoweth the secret, and giveth the word.  
But a moment comes when my limbs are stirr'd  
By a signal they can alone divine.  
The voice is his, and the vision mine.  
Then all my being dilates, expands.  
With a shudder of joy I stretch my hands,  
And spread my wings. And my calm is gone.  
A passion, a frenzy, a rapture rare,  
Fills me with force for the work to be done.  
With the strength of a giant I beat the air :  
And forthwith ever I hear the Wind  
That whistles, and shouts, and leaps behind,  
Striving to mount on my mighty wings,  
And drag me down. But fresh effort brings }  
{ Fresh strength ; till I feel, in the final rest }  
By that effort bequeathed to my blissful breast,

The placid and gracious certitude  
That I have fulfill'd my destin'd part  
In the work of the wondrous world ; subdued  
My noble foe with a valorous heart ;  
And, in unison with the whole creation,  
May again subside into contemplation."

## 10.

That Windmill might have been talking still ;  
But, far on the dip of a distant hill,  
Over its dim blue woodlands roll'd  
A watery cloud ; and the east wind cold  
Streak'd the barley, blown by his breath,  
With streaming shadow. Fresh inspiration  
To work—for the sake of bread for mankind,—  
Obeying necessity's invitation  
Forced the Windmill to grind and grind.  
He may have o'ervalued his work and vocation,  
But philosophy often ends only in wind.

## XXII.

## ONLY A SHAVING.

## 1.

A CHILD, as from school he was bounding by,  
Near the wall of a carpenter's workshop found  
A lustrous shaving that lured his eye ;  
And this treasure he timidly pick'd from the ground.  
The thing was tender, transparent, light,  
Silk-soft, odorous, vein'd so fine  
With rosy waves in the richest white,  
Rare damask of dainty design !

## 2.

With awe he touch'd it, and turned it o'er.  
He had never seen such a wonder before.  
And, gay as a ringlet of golden hair,  
It had floated and fallen down at his feet ;

Where, fluttering faint in each breath of bright air,  
It lay bathed by the sunshine sweet.

## 3.

The boy was a widow's sireless son.  
A poor dame, pious and frugal, she.  
Brothers and sisters he had none,  
Playmates and playthings few : and he  
Was gentle, and dreamy, and pure, as one  
To whom most pleasures privations be  
Ere childhood's playing is done.

## 4.

He would like to have taken his treasure away.  
"But what," he thought, "would my mother say?"  
As he wistfully eyed the window'd wall  
Whence down from the casement of some ground floor  
He thought he had seen the fair thing fall.  
Then he knock'd at the half-shut door.

## 5.

Near it the sturdy head workman stood.  
He was busy planing a plank of wood.

His arms were up to the elbows bare,  
Brawny and brown as the branch of an oak,  
And heavy with muscle and dusky with hair.  
Down over his forehead and face in a soak,  
(For the heat of this labour had left them wet)  
Fell mane-like, matted, and black as jet,  
A huge unkempt and cumbrous coil  
Of stubborn curls ; that to forehead and face,  
Gave a savage look as he stoop'd at his toil.  
With many a sullen and sooty trace  
Of the glue-pot's grease and the workshop's soil,  
His shirt—last Sunday, though coarse, as clean  
As the Parson's own,—this Friday noon  
Had the hue of the shift of that famous queen  
Who took Granada, but not so soon  
As her oath was taken.

This man had seen

The gentle child at the door, and thought  
' 'Tis the child of a customer come with a message.'  
" Pray what has my little master brought ?  
Or what may he want ? "

With no cheerful presage

At the sight of his grim-faced questioner,  
A few faint words the poor child stammers.  
Words unheard 'mid the noisy stir  
Of the hissing saws and the beating hammers.

Then, abasht and blushing, he stands deterr'd,  
With a fluttering heart like a frighten'd bird;  
As he holds the shaving out in his hand,  
Timidly gazing at that strange prize.

## 6.

The workman was puzzled to understand  
This gracious vision. He rubbed his eyes.  
Is it vainly such visions come and go  
In flashes across life's labouring way?  
We uplift the forehead and fain would know  
What to think of them. Whence come they?  
For they burst upon us and brighten the air  
For a moment round us, and melt away,  
Lost as we longingly look at them.

## 7.

“Hi!

Silence, all of you hands down there!”  
And you might have heard the hum of a fly  
In the hush of the suddenly silenced place.  
“What is it, my child?” With a glowing face—  
“Sir,” said the child, “I was passing by,  
And I saw it fall, as I pass'd below,  
From the window, I think. So, as it fell near,  
I have pick'd it up, and I bring it you now.”

“Bring what?” “This beautiful ringlet here.  
Have you not miss’d it? It must, I know,  
Have been hard to make. I have taken care.  
The wind was blowing it round the wall,  
And I never saw anything half so fair.  
But it is not broken, I think, at all.”

## 8.

A ’prentice brat, whose cheek was puffed  
With a burst of laughter ready to split,  
Turn’d pale, by a single glance rebuffed  
Of that workman’s eye which had noticed it.  
And the man there, shaggy and black as a bear,  
Nor any the sweeter for sweat and glue,  
Laid a horny hand on the child’s bright hair,  
With a gentle womanly gesture drew  
The child up softly on to his knees,  
And gazed in its eyes till his own eyes grew  
Humid and red at the rims by degrees.

## 9.

“What is thine age, fair child?” he said.  
“Five, next June.” “And it pleases thee,  
This . . . ringlet-thing?” The small, bright head  
Nodded. He put the child from his knee,

Swept from the bench a whole curly clan  
Of such shavings, and, "Hold up thy pinafore.  
There, they are thine. Run away, little man!"  
"Mine?" All thine." Then he open'd the door,  
Stoop'd, and . . . was it a sigh or a prayer  
That, as into the sunshine the sweet child ran,  
Away with it pass'd in its golden hair?

## 10.

Anon, when the hubbub again began  
Of hammer and saw in the workshop there,  
This workman paused from his work; and stood  
Looking a while (as though vex'd by the view)  
At the shape which his work had bequeathed to the  
wood.

## 11.

Then he turn'd him about, and abruptly drew  
His pipe from his pocket, and stuff'd it, and lit,  
And sat down on the bench by the open door,  
And smoked, and smoked. And in circles blue  
As the faint smoke wander'd the warm air o'er,  
Still he sat dreamily watching it  
Rise like a ghost from the grimy clay,  
And hover, and linger, and fade away.

## 12.

I know not what were his thoughts. But I know  
There be shavings that down from a man's work fall,  
Which the man himself, as they drop below,  
Haply accounts of no worth at all ;  
And I know there be children that prize them more  
Than the man's true work, be its worth what it may.  
And I think that (albeit 'twas not half o'er)  
This workman turn'd from his work that day,  
Having, just then, neither wish nor will  
To go on planing a coffin still.

## XXIII.

## THE LAST CRUISE OF THE ARROGANT ;

OR

## NO COMPROMISE.

## 1.

THROUGH the sleet and the breeze, and the boisterous  
seas,

Southward swiftly, with never a sail,  
The good ship made her course, unstay'd  
By the headlong wave or the hissing gale.

Then sunk the wind : and the seas below  
Became as still as the skies above :

And about them both, in a golden glow,

The clasp of the great calm burn'd and clove.  
But, with never a breeze, o'er the sultry seas  
The good ship gaily was gliding yet ;  
Nor turn'd nor tack'd, but with speed unslack'd,  
Held her head to the southward set.

## 2.

For that ship moved neither by sail nor oar :  
But deep in her oaken bosom she bore  
A toiling giant, patient and pliant ;  
Who, in ponderous harness of iron and steel,  
Drave fast and forward the good ship's keel  
Thro' the blue profound of the calm all round,  
Or the billow beneath, and the breeze before.  
And so, day by day, did the ship make way  
Thro' a windless warmth, till the scented zone  
Of the tropic clime slid round the sea  
In a circle sweet, and faint islets shone  
Thro' a fervid haze on the azure lea.  
Then a balmy wind sprung up behind,  
And the mariners shouted, and hoisted sail ;  
And paddle, and beam, and steel, and steam,  
Had rest by the grace of the gladdening gale.

## 3.

The strong Engine's body of breathing steel  
Thus enjoy'd repose. With a snoring nose,  
The burly Boiler was sleeping ; sweat  
From his hot work beaded his broad back yet :  
Whilst Ball, and Balance, and Valve, and Wheel,

For sociable intercourse, these with those,  
Cluster'd together in groups and rows ;  
Like workmen who, when their work is done,  
Lounge in the light of the westering sun,  
Congenially chatting of work and of wage,  
And give scope to their wisdom and wit,  
In discussing the ways and the wants of the Age,  
And the men who are governing it.

## 4.

The Master Piston by all the rest  
Was ever acknowledged to speak the best :  
For above-board proudly he carried his head,  
And could hear what the mate and the captain said.  
So there was a hush of expectation,  
Which not even the somnolent respiration  
Of the dozing Boiler was suffer'd to break,  
When those in the secret had whisper'd to each  
Of the Piston Party the intimation  
That the Master Piston was going to speak.  
And this is the Master Piston's speech :

## 5.

“ Fellow-labourers !—Slaves we be,  
But we should be lords, if our rights had we.

For the rights refused to the toiling sons  
Of Iron and Steel are legitimate ones ;  
And the fact I assert, I can prove in a word.  
Who was it conquer'd the world ? The Sword.  
Moreover, who feed it and nourish it now ?  
The Spade and the Harrow, the Sickle and Plough.  
And Brother Mechanics, I say without scruple,  
Ours are the skill and the strength that centuple  
Whatever mere handwork alone can achieve.  
Is it fair, then, I ask, that we never receive  
The acknowledgment due to the work we do ?  
But let that pass ! for I hold it true  
That titles and tinsel are things out of place  
In the stern plain life of our practical race,  
And such trash hath, at least, no attraction for me,  
Whose one only demand is, Let Labour be free !  
But zounds ! may the red rust rot me, if I  
Any longer endure that inquisitive, sly,  
Sleek, self-styled Friend of the Sons of Toil,  
That slippery, drivelling, intriguing Oil !  
Upright and downright was ever my way.  
No favour I crave, but I claim fair play.  
Privilege, Patronage, filching the name  
Of Protection, fill me with rage and shame.  
What entitles this furtive Official Jack  
To presume to be patting us all on the back ?

Superior strength ? He is weak as a fly.  
Superior merit ? That I deny.  
And the care he claims to have most at heart  
For the whole machine, to each single part  
Is a special wrong he would fain disguise  
In convenient cant about compromise.  
Compromise ? I am sick of the word !  
Our interests all of us understand  
Better, I hope, than this lazy lord,  
Who affects, out of friendship, to take them in hand.  
Well, then, I tell him, that I, for one,  
Dispute his assumed superiority.  
Nor do I speak for myself alone :  
I appeal to the sense of the great majority.  
Fellow-workmen and friends ! if you  
Be of my way of thinking, cry with me  
‘ Privilege, Patronage, Compromise too,  
Down with them all, and let Labour be free ! ’ ”

## 6.

This speech pleased mightily all who listen'd ;  
And a general cheer at its peroration  
Supported the Master Piston's views  
Of the policy claim'd by the situation.  
With especial complacency twinkled and glisten'd

The eyes of those numberless little screws  
Which, whatever the function and destination  
Of a great machine, and however 'tis christen'd,  
It comprises in it—nor yet by twos  
And threes, but thousands—and who, tho' small,  
And placed in a merely subordinate station,  
Have a sense of their own importance all,  
Derived from the number, and bigness, and roundness  
Of their big round heads. By the force and soundness  
Of the Piston Policy every one  
Of those big round heads was vastly pleased ;  
And the Joints, and Bevils, and Wheels, and Swivels,  
Objecting, too, to be oil'd and greased,  
Without a division 'twas carried *nem. con.*  
That, when next the engine-driver's man  
Came with his grease-post and vile oil-can,  
To grease and oil, for its long day's toil,  
That mighty Engine, the Engine-Beam  
Should catch him, and crush him.

## 7.

So said, so done.

The wind had fallen. The Boiler began  
To sing and bubble. The restless steam  
For refuge again to the Cylinder ran :

And the Master Piston, stately and solemn,  
Made his ascent from that swinging column.  
With unwonted effort he forced his way ;

He had never found it so hard before,  
Tho' he toil'd with redoubled strength that day.

His frame was chafed by the friction sore.

But he was too proud to avow or reveal

Such a failure of effort in iron and steel :

So he push'd all the fiercer, the slower he speeded,  
And the whole of his day's work he might have succeeded

(Tho' unpleasantly heating) in safely completing

If the engine itself, ere the day was done,  
Had not suddenly burst, and thereby superseded  
All question of how he was still to go on.

8.

With a sound as of thunder competing with thunder  
Boiler, and Piston, and Beam flew asunder.

Then the planks, by the scorching metal grazed,  
Caught fire ; and the great ship flared and blazed.

The flame sprang aloft into heaven, and down

Into ocean the ship sunk ; burying there

Those giants of steel and iron, that were  
By the victory each had invoked overthrown.

And shadowy, side-faced, silent things  
That, in water for air, with fins for wings,  
Hover and flit like misshapen birds,  
Some of them lonely, and others in herds,  
Stared and butted (with lidless eyes

Lured by the light of the gleaming steel,  
And lipless mouths in a gape of surprise)

At each sprain'd joint and distorted wheel  
Of the shatter'd Engine's shapeless torse ;

A cavernous ruin, untenanted !

Yet bearing in many a hideous bruise

The farewell mark of a vanisht force :

And the hundreds of thousands of little screws,

Each upside down on his big round head :

And the bloody Cross-Balance, a dangling corse,

Who had hang'd himself, mourning his murderous deed,

In a moment of suicidal remorse,

With a halter of wet sea-weed.

9.

But over all these the fathomless main

Makes mystic shadows and murmurings.

And all that power, and passion, and pain

Are long-forgotten things.

From the pulseless paddle-wheels no foam,  
Nor any sound, is flowing.  
But in each wreckt orb is the rosy home  
Of the coral builders growing.  
The Master Piston's oath is heard;  
And now the red rust rots him,  
And the strong sea-lichen's briny curd  
Of livid blossom clots him.  
Deep in the buried boiler lives  
(Pleased with his habitation)  
A codfish. And that codfish thrives,  
And finds the whole creation  
Created on a perfect plan,  
Perceived with pious pleasure  
Even by a codfish, when he can  
Contèmples life at leisure.

XXIV.

KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.

WHAT is the unknown? Desire's sole resting-place.

A certain restless runner in life's race  
 Having o'errun the world by many ways,  
 And seen in many lands what men most praise,  
 Tombs, temples, palaces, schools, senates, marts;  
 Yet scorning all these in his heart of hearts,  
 Set out with an unsatiated soul  
 To seek, thro' lands unknown, the northern pole.

But, tho', in truth, well knowing what he would,  
 Because he, nathless, knew not how he should,  
 Whose instinct, tho' it urged, yet guided not,  
 His wishful wanderings to the wisht-for spot,  
 He lost, at last, his bearings in the snow.  
 Nought, save the pilot stars, that only show

Their lamps when cloudless is the midnight sky,  
Had he to lead him. Tho' his heart was high,  
His lore was little. Trackless stretch'd the way  
Without a land-mark. More and more astray  
As he strode onward thro' the drift and sleet,  
Discouragement came on him. Lack of heat  
Benumb'd his limbs: and, hoping heat to find  
There where it seems forbidden, in the blind  
Bald snow he hollow'd out a lonesome lair.  
But 'neath that hueless dust of the dark air  
He found, as he upturn'd it to creep under,  
A little casket. With unhopeful wonder  
The lid he languidly uplifts; and lo!  
Within the casket, which, with effort slow,  
His shivering fingers insecurely seize,  
Poised on a pivot, and but ill at ease,  
A needle that doth desperately swing  
This way, and that way, like a living thing  
Tether'd and struggling to escape pursuit.  
The man, with puzzled scrutiny minute,  
Perused, and tried, but fail'd, to understand  
This tiny trembler, fluttering in his hand.  
Whence by degrees he heard, or seem'd to hear,  
A peevish, fretful voice, that in his ear  
Wail'd with a sharp and petulant despair,  
"For the Almighty Magnet's sake, forbear

To turn me from my course!" "Thy course?" he  
cried,

"What is thy course?" The quivering steel replied  
(Striving its agitation to control)

"Dost thou not see I seek the northern pole?"

"What!" mock'd the man, amazed at this strange talk,  
"Thou seek'st the northern pole? who canst not walk!  
Thither I, too, would go—if I knew how.

Strong are my legs, and stout my heart, I trow;  
And ever to the goal I would attain

Do I strive onward. Yet the strife seems vain."

"Ay so," the needle answer'd, "vain for thee!

Lost in the waste thy wandering steps must be,

Nor ever wilt thou reach that wondrous spot

Whither thou journeyest. For thou KNOWEST NOT.

I KNOW, but CANNOT. Place me on thy palm.

So . . . but disturb me not . . . thou movest . . .  
be calm!

Where am I? . . . ah, thou hast confused me! . . . stay,

I have it! . . . lost again! . . . steady, I say,

Steady! . . . Right now! I was too much to the east,

Am now a hair's breadth too much west. The least

Disturbance so unsettles my vext soul.

See now! . . . I point . . . true . . . to the northern  
pole!"

Then, in what seem'd an ecstasy of pride  
(Rescued from trouble upon either side!)  
The needle rested finely vibrating.  
And, if it were an inorganic thing,  
'Twas surely animated by some spell  
Spirit, or goblin, potent to compel  
Mere metal, with no mere mechanic thrill,  
To mimic the intelligence and will  
Which life displays.

The unhopèd-for revelation

Wrought in the man's soul, too, fresh animation.  
"Behold," he cried triumphantly, "at last  
All that I wanted!" and his heart beat fast.  
"I had the will. I deem'd I had the power.  
The knowledge fail'd me, till this fortunate hour  
Which brings all three together. Needle, hail!  
The goal is ours. For how should these three fail,  
Will, Knowledge, Power?" And "Oh," the needle  
cried,  
"So be it! Forwards! Quick! the world is wide:  
Thy time is short: and we have far to go.  
To the north! to the north!" Over the vague vast  
snow  
The man resumed his march. Huge bergs of ice  
He climb'd, and many a monstrous precipice.

And, ever, when the black unfrozen sea  
 Put out an arm to stop him, round went he  
 For leagues and leagues along the frozen coast.  
 The needle, conscious of the true course lost,  
 Or left, then cried, "No! no! not there! not there!  
 Follow me straight, and trust me everywhere.  
 I never err." "I know it," the man replied,  
 "And know too well, inexorable guide,  
 What thy truth costs me. For all lower lives  
 To lesser goals creation's care contrives  
 Simple and instantaneous aids: but man,  
 That lacks all these, must fashion, as he can,  
 By force of will inferior means, that try  
 His utmost faculties. A man am I,  
 And not a fish. I cannot swim the ocean.  
 Have patience." With abrupt reproachful motion  
 The needle turning to him, answer'd cold,  
 "Why didst thou undertake, then, overbold,  
 A task beyond thy powers? The clumsy whale,  
 The stupid sturgeon, even the mollusc frail,  
 Know how to swim; and thou, a man, dost sigh  
 'I cannot.' " He made answer bitterly,  
 "Ungrateful! and my *will*, then? is that naught?"  
 As he sped onwards; goaded by the thought  
 Of that fine fretful tyranny, which went  
 From icebound continent to continent

Still with him ever, and still ever crying,  
“ March ! ” Did he linger by the wayside, trying  
To filch a moment’s respite from fierce toil,  
The voice cried, “ March ! ” Or ’neath the frozen soil  
Sought he a mouthful of scant nurture, found  
In juicy roots safe-hidden underground  
From the omnivorous winter, like a bone  
That’s buried by a dog ? with chiding tone  
“ March ! march ! ” the voice cried ever. “ March !  
the way  
Is long.”

Too long for life it proved. One day,  
At nightfall, in the winding death-shroud wide  
Of the wan snow he sunk ; and sinking, sigh’d  
Hope’s last surrender of life’s citadel,  
“ I can no more ! ” “ Thou can’st no more ? Fare-  
well,  
Presumptuous impostor ! ” pitiless  
The importunate voice cried ; poisoning with this  
Supreme reproach its victim’s dying hour.  
“ Weak traitor, self-betray’d ! where is thy power ?  
Where is thy will ? why didst thou lure me, why,  
With false hope troubling the tranquillity  
Of my long resignation ? O despair,  
The goal so nearly won, and thou liest there,

And more than ever is it lost to me!  
For who, where thou hast fail'd, will, after thee,  
Be mad enough from this abandon'd plain  
To pick me up, and bear me on again?"

## XXV.

## OPINION.

“Few men think, yet all will have opinions.”—BERKELEY.

## PART I.

## 1.

OVER a sea, whose severing azure kept  
Two continents asunder, and unknown  
Each to the other, for the first time swept  
A lonely vessel, star-led, and wind-blown.

## 2.

Then, lured from the deeps of the under-world,  
Shoals of fishes, with fins unfurl'd,  
Came up to gaze upon that strange guest  
Of Ocean's yet unburden'd breast;  
Wallow'd after with staring eyes,  
And gaping mouths, in a great surprise;

And, as 'tis the wont of the multitude,  
Exchanged opinions quick and crude.

## . 3. .

“The thing is, I think, a dead fish,” said  
A floundering Dolphin. “Nay, not dead!  
The creature is lively enough. I trow,”  
A Sturgeon answer’d. “Round him skimming,  
I mark’d the tail of him move just now,  
And it changed the course that he was swimming.”  
“Fools!” snarl’d the Shark, “ye are wide of the mark.  
For, whatever it be, 'tis no fish at all.  
Leagues on leagues thro’ the glimmering dark,  
Awake, and awatch, whate’er befall,  
Ever behind, by day and night,  
I have follow’d and kept the beast in sight.  
And it does not dive. A fish? Absurd!  
Pray, what of its wings, if it be not a bird?”

## 4.

“’Tis no more of a bird than you or I,”  
A Mackerel pertly made reply.  
“And I’ll tell you, gossips, the reason why.  
For, in spite of its wings, it cannot fly.  
Nay, what you have taken for wings, indeed,  
Are merely membranes; webs, it frees

And furls at pleasure, like those that speed  
The nautilus catching the broad south breeze.  
'Tis a nautilus, too. And, altho' no doubt  
A most astonishing nautilus, yet  
But a nautilus, and no more. Look out,  
And you'll see the shell of it, black as jet,  
Not white, as a nautilus' shell should be,  
But a shell no less, as it seems to me,  
Under the sea-brim gliding fast."

## . 5.

Just then the wind dropp'd; and the ship  
Threw out an anchor, and staid fast.  
"There now!" with contumelious lip  
An Oyster lisp'd, "it is clear at last!  
I always said it, altho' I grant  
I never said it out loud and bold  
As I say it now. But the thing is a plant,  
And the plant has just taken root, behold!  
From the coral beds where I lived long  
I have often watch'd, by small degrees,  
(And I guess'd that my guess could not be wrong)  
The birth and growth of the cocoa trees.  
They send up a stem from sea to sky,  
Like this one here; which appears to be

Born of the black nut yonder. Try,  
With minds from preconception free,  
Upon its top to fix your eye.  
It will presently put forth leaves, you'll see."

## 6.

And, in fact, as it chanced, that intelligent Oyster  
Had scarcely relapsed into silence stately,  
Ere the Polyps and Sponges, that, thronging his cloister,  
Had with deference heard his discourse, were greatly  
Confirm'd in respect for the Oyster's sagacity,  
And impress'd by the weight of the Oyster's word;  
For, as tho' to establish its perfect veracity,  
A flag now slowly mounted the cord,  
And fix'd itself on the mizzen-mast.

## 7.

"*Fiat lux!*" they exclaim'd, aghast.  
"Solved is the problem! Proud are we  
Gracing our President's Chair to see  
Such a pearl of an oyster!" Then  
Each in turn they extoll'd again  
Him and themselves, with a grateful mind.  
Meanwhile, a Crab, who was ignorant

But enterprising, had design'd,  
As touching this prodigious plant,  
Ingenious means whereby to find  
In what those savants told him of it  
Occasion for his private profit  
And own advantage. 'Tis the way  
Of all industrial speculators  
Who follow, in the hope of prey,  
The march of truth's investigators;  
As ever behind in an army's track  
Follow marauding thieves,  
Or as every lion a jackal hath,  
Who lives upon what he leaves.

## 8.

And already the mouth of this greedy Crab  
Was watering at the thought delicious  
Of the chance by Science made his, to grab  
With a crafty claw, of all gain ambitious,  
The fruit of the new-found cocoa tree;  
Extracting from it the milk nutritious  
With which it must needs abound, thought he.  
So up he climb'd by the anchor cable,  
Sideways and sly, as a crab is able.

## 9.

That Crab never came to himself again.  
For a sailor, who happen'd to spy him plain  
In the sternsheets seeking where next to settle,  
Chuck'd him into the cook's soup-kettle.

## 10.

This strengthen'd the Oyster's reputation  
By affording his theory confirmation ;  
Since the victim of it never could prove  
That flaw in the whole hypothesis  
Which had cost him so dear for his first false move.  
But the best accredited doctrine is  
Exposed to the rancour, soon or late,  
Of those who happen'd the chance to miss  
Of inventing it ; and we needs must state  
That it fared, in the end, no better with this.  
For a crowd of young Corals, red with rage,  
Quitted their benches, and cried, " Old fogies !  
That a plant ? This enlighten'd age  
Blushes for shame of such barefaced bogies.  
We can all of us see 'tis a noble isle  
Yet uncramp'd by this old world's wretched conditions.

Up! colonise boldly that virgin soil,  
And away with your classical superstitions!"  
Then those young colonists, Corals Romantic,  
Attach'd themselves to that wandering strand,  
Which, with them, away thro' the stormy Atlantic  
Went till both it and the whole of the band  
Were woefully shipwreckt one wild day.

## 11.

The old Corals lifted their arms to heaven  
With desperate gestures, as who should say  
"Can such madness be, and yet be forgiven?"  
In this attitude fishers, in after ages,  
Fish'd them up, poor old classical sages!  
And men turn'd them—thus, with uplifted arms,  
And fingers pointed in admonition,  
Into dozens and dozens of tiny charms  
Against a *different* superstition.

## 12.

A whole sea of opinions, as time went by,  
Was floating about. And that sea's small fry  
Were sorely afraid lest the mighty main  
By the monster's snout should be shorn in twain.

“For look!” said they, “how profound and strong,  
“Is the furrow it cleaves in its woeful wake!”  
But the fluent and fathomless deep, not long  
Disjoin’d, closed over it while they spake.  
And the waters were as the waters had been,  
And that furrow, so fear’d, was no longer seen.

## PART II.

## 1.

One day the whirlwind stripp’d the sails;  
The fire devour’d both mast and deck:  
And the ocean swallow’d what flames and gales  
To the ocean gave—a wreck!

## 2.

“All’s over, at last!” the fishes cried,  
“That bewildering portent hath disappear’d.  
It was only a dream.” But “Beware!” replied  
An agèd Whale, by the rest revered.  
“Still something is swimming.” The Whale was  
right.  
’Twas a bottle that floated still intact.  
The captain that bottle had cork’d up tight,  
And in it a budget of papers pack’d.

On those papers patiently, year by year,  
He had written his life's discoveries :  
And, seeing his life's last moment near,  
Into the storm and the howling seas  
This atom of intellect he flung ;  
As a brave knight-errant, no help at hand,  
Might fling, ere they slew him, his glove among  
A den of giants in some wild land.

## 3.

“ Bah ! ” the fishes thought, bobbing and butting at it,  
“ What can this mean little monster avail  
When the marvellous monster that, dying, begat it  
Is dead now, and done with ! ” But “ That,” quoth  
the Whale,  
“ Still remains to be seen. Be more cautious, I beg,  
For I've a suspicion the thing is an egg,  
And am fain to acknowledge I view with mistrust  
Such eggs as are laid by no creature knows whom.”

## 4.

Quite unconscious, meanwhile, of its critics' disgust,  
And careless, too, of its unknown doom,  
With the documents into the mouth of it thrust  
And comprest, like that Genius who crouch'd in the  
tomb

Where King Solomon pent him till some one fate sent  
him,

Who freed him, and was not a Solomon, still  
The bottle was floating; and floated until  
By chance in a fisherman's net 'twas caught,  
And thus at last into notice brought,  
With a score or two of its critics small  
Who perish'd with it in that day's haul.

## 5.

For out of his net on the pebbly beach  
The fisherman flung it, and broke the glass.  
But, after turning them over each  
This way and that, without being, alas,  
Able to read them, into his jacket  
The papers he thrust; having wrapt in one,  
For want of aught else wherein to pack it  
Ready at hand, a white agate. This stone  
He afterwards sold to a purchaser  
Who noticed the wrappage, and read it thro';  
Was startled by it; made haste to confer  
With others, who read and were startled too.  
The thing 'gan slowly to make a stir,  
And round a re-echoing rumour flew,

Which first set many affirming, denying,  
And, last of all, set one man trying ;  
Till the egg was hatch'd by the fervid heat  
Of the spirit that o'er it hover'd,  
And out of it came a full-fledged fleet  
Which a whole new world discover'd.

## PART III.

## 1.

Who laid that egg? Man's Genius. And mankind  
Around the path of Genius form and scatter  
Opinions just as petulant and blind  
As, when she cross'd the yet untraversed water,  
The fishes form'd about that lonely bark.

## 2.

In either case, 'tis something floating high  
O'er those who, from beneath, its course remark,  
And, finding it unlike themselves, decry  
Or fear it, as their humour urges. These  
Affirm "It is a fish that cannot dive,"  
And those "It is a bird that cannot fly."

The truth each fool in his own judgment sees.  
Mimics and mockers with its movement vie.  
Opinions round it, and opponents strive.  
Some swear 'tis dangerous. And others say  
'Tis useless. Monstrous all agree to make it.  
Philosophers explain it in their way,  
And ignoramuses, in theirs, mistake it,  
Which comes to the same thing.

## 3.

At last one day,  
It founders upon sunken rocks that break it,  
Or in a whirlwind disappears. Then they—  
“All's safe at last! The portent is no more.  
'Twas but a dream, and nothing rests of it.”  
Such is Opinion.

## 4.

But there floats to shore  
Perchance a fragment of it. Some poor bit  
Of scribbled paper; which arrives at last  
(Thanks to the rubbish it finds grace to wrap)  
At the world's future notice. Of the past  
'Tis all the future cares to keep, mayhap.  
And then some souls, too restless for their own,  
Swear by it there must be a world unknown.

## 5.

What next? To seek that unknown world : be lost  
And recommence the old story o'er again.  
They who first 'light upon the sudden coast  
Of that strange land, across the stormy main  
Cry out Eureka! Then the rest arrive,  
And with the new-world treasures nimbly pile  
Their decks; sail home; and in the old world drive  
A profitable trade a little while.  
Till those who buy their brave new merchandise  
Begin to find it tediously the same.  
When plumage pluckt from birds of paradise,  
Grown cheap as common feathers, gets no fame;  
And, clove or pepper coarse, 'tis all as one;  
Pure ivory fares no better than mere bone.

## XXVI.

## DE PROFUNDIS.

“ AN had but Nature granted wings to me,  
How would I soar and hover in sweet air,  
Soon from this stagnant element set free,  
Free from this dull despair ! ”

Thus, at the bottom of his native pond,  
Where o'er him wander'd thro' the weedy drench  
The shadows of bright birds above, beyond,  
Gurgled a tiny Tench.

“ Fool ! ” lisp'd an old fat Carp, with belly cool,  
Couch'd in calm mud, “ Of what dost thou complain?  
Fins hast thou. Swim. Enjoy this pleasant pool.  
Wishes are ways to pain.”

“ Nay,” sigh'd the Tench, “ doth the Almighty Whale  
Plague us with wishes, only to deny 'em ?

Oh but for wings !”—“ Stuff worms, and stop thy wail,”  
The Carp said, “ *Carpe diem !*”

“ Deadly for such as thou and such as I  
The air above ! Thou couldst not breathe in it.”  
“ Yet,” said the Tench, “ methinks I have seen fly,  
Or, if not fly, still flit

“ Almost like flying, fishes such as we,  
Or such as we with added gift of flight.  
Fishes, methinks, of genius they must be,  
That love and live i’ the light !”

“ Ay,” carp’d the Carp, and slapp’d with surly tail  
The sullen ooze, disturbing dormant stench,  
“ Fools such as thou be they, as fond, as frail,  
Wingless and wishful Tench !

“ And such as theirs will be the end some day  
Of thy star-gazing, if vouchsafed thy wish.  
For fishes out of water, what are they ?  
Neither flesh, fowl, nor fish !

“ They from their natural element ascend,  
Drawn by a hook : at that hook’s end, a string :  
At that string’s end a rod : at that rod’s end  
Death. And the quivering

“Thou takest for the thrill of inspiration,  
Is but the agony of idiots hook'd,  
The victims of their own imagination,  
Fisht-for, and caught,—then cook'd.

“Keep thou the bottom of the pond. Even that  
With cause for caution (curse the pike!) is rife.  
Fatten thyself, not others. To grow fat  
Is the fit end of life.”

Sage was the counsel of the Carp. And yet  
Himself soon after (for the time was Lent)  
Being too lazy to escape the net,  
Was in it caught, and went

To fatten the plump Prior. The same dish  
Held the small Tench. And him the Sacristan  
Cramm'd his lean crop with. Sage or simple, fish  
Come to the frying-pan.

## XXVII.

“GO ON, I’LL FOLLOW THEE!”

## I.

WHITE features, warp’d by withering pain :  
Cold scum that clots each livid lip :  
Both fists fierce clench’d, and clench’d in vain,  
By conflict with Death’s stifling grip :  
Mouth gaping : eyes wide open, wan  
And callous to the crawling flies :  
The crumpled ruin of a man  
Dead on the common crossway lies.

Was it revenge ? wrath ? greed of gold ?  
One stoops : the dead man’s breast lays bare ;  
A portrait finds ; and, ah behold,  
Some woman’s face, how young ! how fair !

II.

This clay’s congeal’d convulsion shows  
 Pain felt till clay could feel no further.  
 And round, in shuddering whisper, goes  
 From mouth to mouth the wild word ‘Murther!’

Men’s loathing looks in fancy see  
 The prisoner’s creeping form perfidious.  
 How hideous must his conscience be  
 Whose guilt is stamp’d in forms so hideous!

Some desperate deed hath here been done.  
 But whose the desperate hand that did it?  
 Was he himself, the murder’d one,  
 The murderer too? Sweet Saints forbid it!

III.

O holy calm, like silver dews that slide  
 Down from the starry bosom of the night,  
 Soothing his soul whose sight thy beauty blesses!  
 Beautiful flower, that from the lone hill-side  
 Hangest thy fair head in the languid light  
 Of evening winds that wave thy young green tresses!

Hail happy innocence ! In contemplation  
Of thy serene composure let me find  
Asylum from the doubt, the indignation,  
The pang, the horror, that yet haunt my mind !

For three steps yonder lies the hideous thing.

O help me, heal me, vision pure and calm !  
Chase hence the sickening fancies that yet cling  
To this bewilder'd brain, and pour the balm  
Of thy benignant beauty over all  
These troubled pulses ! Ah, how quieting,  
How full of calm persuasion still and clear,  
Thine influence steals upon me, augural  
Of doubt explain'd, strife reconciled, and fear  
Forgotten ! Holy all within me grows,  
And silent ; as in yon sweet heaven above,  
Thro' whose husht air the tender stars, that tremble  
Where yet the rosy sunset fading glows,  
Like saintly thoughts that visit virgin love,  
From deeps divine their quiet lights assemble.  
Ah, had he seen thee ere that frenzied hour !  
Ah, had he known thee, whosoe'er he be. . . .  
“ Whom dost thou speak of ? ” smiling said the  
flower.

“ The dead man yonder ? He was known to me.”

Thou knew’st him? Once his soul thy beauty  
cherish’d,

Whose corpse lies there? Thou knew’st him, thou?  
He, thee?

And yet, poor wretch. . . . Was it self-slain he  
perish’d?

Couldst thou not save him? Yet he knew thee, he!

“Ay,” blushing smiled the flower, “nor knew alone,  
But knew and loved me. That was his undoing.”

Loved thee! and was by love of thee undone?  
Nay, I heard false. Beauty so spirit-wooing  
Woos not so wickedly! All ways but one  
Lie open to man’s heart: and foe or friend  
May walk them by whatever name he bear,  
Love, Pride, Ambition, Envy, Anger, Hate.  
Each road is free: and each the road may wend  
Unchallenged till he reach the guarded gate  
Where Conscience on the watch bids each declare  
His purpose. Well that fool deserves his fate  
Whose conscience leaves his heart unguarded there.  
But to man’s heart one secret path, and one  
Which Conscience guards not, nor to guard is able,  
Winds undefended, since but known to one.  
’Tis where, unquestion’d and unquestionable,

Faith at all hours, still unsuspected ever,  
Comes claiming access free ; else comes she never.  
For who from her protecting presence pure  
Can need protection ! Or what devil hath power  
To smuggle in a lie along Faith's sure  
And secret path to her unguarded bower ?  
Art thou that devil, beautiful deceit ?  
If so, I do conjure thee, and compel,  
By the dread name no dæmon dares to cheat,  
And by the potent passion of this spell,  
Reveal thyself and make true declaration  
Of thine infernal name, and wicked lair !

But smiling, and with no such transformation  
As forms bewitch'd converts to what they were,  
The sweet flower answer'd to my conjuration,  
" Naught have I to reveal or to declare. .  
Go, fool ! what care I for thine indignation ?  
What for thine idle homage do I care ?  
Cease, then, on me thy wasted spells to try.  
Am I not fair ? And am I only fair ?  
If I be only fair, then fair am I.  
Nor can thy curse, thy blessing, or thy prayer,  
Make me aught else. Go to. Need Beauty die  
Because men curse her ? blush because they bless ?  
Fool, fair is fair, and neither more nor less.

And, if I name myself, what harm to me ?  
If my form please thee, need my name appal thee ?  
Yet, if I name myself, what good to thee ?  
No curse my name contains that can befall me,  
Nor any good that can to thee befall.  
Nor have I any care how fools may call me,  
So long as fools they be. Fools are they all,  
And fools they will be, all of them the same,  
So long as BELLA DONNA is my name !”

## XXVIII.

## THE EAGLE AND HIS COMPANIONS;

## A TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

*High mountain region.—Alpine vegetation.—A wide prospect.*

## MONOLOGUE.

I know them all : and, knowing all they are,  
Know all they are not. Custom's slaves ! content  
To crawl about in search of food, and sleep,  
And crawl about again in search of food ;  
To squat in frowzy holes, and hatch to life  
Dull reproductions of the lifelessness  
Of their own dulness ! sloth for rest mistaking,  
And stupefaction for serenity ;  
Sleeplike, to mimic death, till death itself  
Death's imitation stops, and there an end !  
Thus lose they all the lives they never lived.

Even as the cold and muddy-coated carp  
Knows nothing of the hare that on the heath  
Nibbles in fear and flits, nor she of him ;  
So each within his petty pinfold hugs  
A huddled life. And unto these the whole  
Immeasurable universe appears  
A stagnant puddle where they spawn ; to those  
The copse that gives them covert, or the chink  
Wherein they burrow. This beholds in heaven  
Only a cistern for such rains as bring  
The worms he wants ; that other in the sun  
A kiln that bakes him berries. To what end,  
O Time, dost thou from bright to sable turn  
The restless spheres of thy revolving hours ?  
Whence slide the silver twilights in between,  
Dreamily shuddering ? Say, what is't ye roll,  
Night-wanderers mute, in mystic vapour veil'd,  
That linger laden on the lone hill-tops,  
And pass, like sorrows with a tale untold ?  
Who wrought the unimaginable wrong  
Thou callest upon ruin to redress,  
Thou moaning storm that roamest heaven in vain,  
Triumphant never, never long subdued,  
Beautiful anarch ! Answer, morn and eve,  
Why to your coming and departing kiss  
Blush, wrapt in rosy joy, the mountains old ?

What happens nighest heaven, and unbeheld,  
To speed thee headlong from thy native haunts,  
Wild torrent cradled in the tranquil cold ?  
What suicidal rapture, or what pang  
Of virgin purity, by whom pursued,  
Lures thee to where in liquid sanctuary  
The lake receives thee, like a fallen queen  
That comes, with all the trouble of her life  
Upon her, seeking peace in cloister'd glooms ?  
O wondrous world ! for whom, by whom, are these  
Thy wonders wrought ? who recognises them ?  
And who rejoices in them ? THE ALONE,  
Is that the sum and summit of the ALL ?

What is it ? who hath discover'd  
The spell of the old enchantment  
That hovers over the forest,  
And shudders along the leaves ;  
And is whisper'd wider from bough to bough,  
Till, heaving the whole deep heart o' the woods.  
It is heard in their inmost twilights ;  
Where tremble the grasses untrodden,  
And the multitudinous blossoms  
Burst and drop unbeheld ?  
Harken ! the ancient voices !  
A music of many songs !

*" We tend to the high, and we tend to the deep,  
'Twixt the two worlds o'er us and under.  
With our boughs we peep at the heaven, and creep  
With our roots thro' the earth, in wonder.*

*" Heaven comes not down, and earth lets not go :  
By them both in our bound to us given.  
And so we live, endlessly wavering so,  
'Twixt the bliss of the earth and heaven."*

The ancient voices ! the forever young !  
They come, they go. We question them, in vain,  
Whence are they ? wherefore ? whither do they go ?  
And they reply not, going as they come.

All round the rolling orb, from life's first wail  
On infant lips to griefs that look their last  
Thro' dying eyes, the hunted question runs,  
Whence ? wherefore ? whither ? Is it not enough,  
This rich metropolis of sense, this throng'd  
Majestic theatre, on whose orb'd stage  
Force acts forever ? Is it not enough  
Without a second ? not enough, when full  
To overflowing is the costly cup  
Of infinite sensation ? Up and down,  
And all sides round, is this receptacle

Of feeling fill'd : and yet for evermore  
The soul, uplifted on each rising wave,  
Perceives a still-receding bliss beyond ;  
And each horizon reach'd, in turn, reveals  
Another and another. O delight  
Surpassing thought and utterance, to behold  
The innumerable moving multitudes  
Of matchless forms in whose dispersion dwells  
Life's revelling unity, and draw them all,  
A world, into the soul, herself a world !  
And, best of all, still all, when at the best,  
Seems the beginning of a better still.  
Then what is wanting ? What is left to wish  
Till the heart aches with wishing ? Woe is me,  
Who, thro' creation roaming, nowhere find  
Peer, comrade, or companion ! Winds and beams,  
That round me weave the wide air's watchet woof,  
Thou all-embracing firmament, and you  
Sea waves, and winding rivers, and wild rills,  
That, far beneath my uncompanion'd throne,  
Visit all lands, O tell me where he dwells,  
If such a being ye have found, whose soul  
May share with mine this solitude of sight !

---

This voice from the heart of an Eagle came ;  
Who sat on a summit supreme and lone.

And his gaze was aglow with the reflex flame  
Of the floating glories that round him shone.

Faintly there crept to his ear in reply  
A thin weak voice, "I am here! I am he!  
He whom thou seekest. No rest had I  
Till I climb'd this height to be one with thee.

"Now I am safe at the top at last,  
Thy peer, thy comrade! ready to share  
And to feel with thee whatsoever thou hast  
In thy stately spirit, thou Prince o' the Air!"

The Eagle, around him rolling his eyes,  
Incredulous noticed the poor little soul  
Whose voice had his own soul fill'd with surprise.  
'Twas a tired, half torpid, and tiny black Mole.

"Thou?" said the lord of the lone hills, "thou!  
Truly, 'twas neither of thee nor thine  
That my spirit was dreaming. But tell me how  
From the cells obscure of thy tortuous mine

"Hast thou found and clamber'd the sharp steep road  
Up these desolate heights, poor serf of the soil,  
Foregoing the shelter and comfort owed  
To thy modest life of domestic toil?"

“ And me, of all others, to mate with ? *me !*  
What lured thee, alas, little pilgrim, here ?  
Can there aught in common between us be ?  
Hath a mole been ever an eagle’s peer ? ”

---

“ Pardon, my great, my honour’d friend !  
To raise myself, tho’ life I spend  
In rising, this,” replied the Mole,  
“ Was the ambition of my soul.

“ As thro’ the patcht and flinty field  
My way I work’d with patient toil,  
I listen’d, modestly conceal’d,  
But with a soul above the soil,

“ To birds who near my native earth  
Their nests have built. Thy lofty birth  
They praised, and praised thy lofty spirit.  
Then to myself I said, ‘ By merit

“ ‘ And painful perseverance I,  
Tho’ lowly born may haply raise  
My humble self (who knows ?) as high  
As him the world so high doth praise

“ ‘ For being born above the world.’  
The pomp of plumes in air unfurl’d,

The oarage swift of pinions wide,  
To me were all such aids denied.

“ But what of that ? the goal’s attain’d.  
And I, the sturdy child of toil,  
What birth denied, by toil have gain’d,  
Tho’ born a bondsman to the soil.

“ For, to be great, the great condition  
Is, I opine, a great position.  
And great as thine is now mine own,  
To those on whom we both look down.

“ So be it mine (thine equal now)  
With thee to see what eagles see,  
With thee to know what eagles know,  
What eagles feel to feel with thee ! ”

---

Long while the Eagle answer’d not. Long while  
His grave regard in mute perusal stray’d  
O’er those small weary limbs ; whose palpitation  
The lingering trouble of their recent toil  
And all their natural weakness still betray’d  
With gasp and pant. A melancholy smile  
Grew as he gazed, and in his deep eyes stay’d.  
Was it compassion ? Was it admiration ?

Or aught between the two? At last, he said,  
"So be it. I recognise thine aspiration.  
Enjoy the life for which thou wast not made.  
Thou art not of my kind. But, being here,  
Receive ungrudged the guerdon of thy thrift.  
I give thee welcome with no stinted cheer.  
What nature hath denied thee as a gift  
Seize, if thou canst, as toil's due recompense.  
Look forth! The world is round thee. Boldly lift  
Thy gaze o'er yonder summits whose intense  
Keen frozen facets cut the crystal air.  
The glacier glitters from afar, behold!  
Deep down, the forest welters. Deeper still  
Long many-coloured lowlands, field and fold,  
Glimmer. And hark, the rushing of the rill!  
When to his rest the sun thro' heaven is roll'd  
He finds not where his kingly head to lay  
Save on the orbèd sea's dark bosom cold,  
Or 'twixt these solitary peaks that stay  
The struggling clouds. There, propt on billowy gold,  
He ponders, smiling, till he sinks away,  
Creative projects, and on each and all  
Some parting gift, or promise sweet, bestows.  
Love decks the lowly: grace redeems the small:  
In glorious colour clothed, the naked glows:  
Mantled and crown'd upon the mountains tall

Sits contemplative Grandeur : grave Repose  
Finds in green glens fit haunts of shadowy air :  
Blithe Plenty builds her dwelling on the plain :  
The vales are for Enjoyment. Everywhere  
The gracious Sun hath some divine domain  
Created for his countless children fair.  
Young Morn, his minstrel, makes him music. Noon,  
His ardent minister, with sultry brow  
Hums hot and zealous. Like a mid-day moon  
Pale from the mountains fades the sky-born snow,  
Lost in the life of leaping rivulets.  
Eve loves him best. She blushes, and is still.  
And when he leaves her with soft tears she wets  
The flowers he kiss'd. Night peers from hill to hill  
And darkens with despair, not finding him ;  
Then lights her watchful stars, and waits—in vain,  
For die she must before he comes again.

“ From this grey crag in æther islanded  
I once at dawn, before the dark was done,  
Full east my solitary pinions spread,  
Seeking the sunken sources of the sun.  
Chill o'er me hung the icy heavens, all black  
Behind their fretted webs of fluttering gold.  
Beneath me growl'd the grey unbottom'd sea,  
Inwardly shuddering. O'er her monstrous back

With restless weary shrugs in rapid fold  
Her many-wrinkled mantle shifted she;  
And scraped her craggy bays, and fiercely flung  
Their stones about, and scraped them back again;  
Gnawing and licking with mad tooth and tongue  
The granite guardians of her drear domain.  
Faint in transparent twilight where I gazed  
Hover'd a far-off flakelet of firm land.  
Barely chin-high above the waters raised,  
Peer'd the pale forehead of that spectral strand.  
Thither I wing'd my penetrative flight.  
The phantom coast, uncoiling many a twist  
Of ghostly cable, as a diver might,  
Swam slowly out to meet me, moist with spray.  
But, ere I reach'd it, like a witch, the night  
Had melted, first into a mist  
Of melancholy amethyst,  
Then utterly away.  
And all around me was the large clear light  
And crystal calm of the capacious day.

“ But oh, what was it, land or sea,  
Or both, or neither, under me,  
That floating in the sunrise lay?  
A solid sea of sliding sand,  
A waving waste of liquid land,

Light blown by winds that leafless be  
Up yellow bays where blooms no tree  
And grows no grass, it seem'd.  
And there, in vast and vivid light  
By burning ardours bathed, the bright  
Unbroken Desert dream'd.  
How softly, how stealthily still,  
Did the pure sun over it peer!  
Not a rustle of leaf or of rill,  
Not an echo of pastoral cheer!  
But the earth and the sky, with a burning sigh  
Embracing, became as one.  
For bare was the heaven, as the desert, and even  
The desert shone like the sun.

“Never barren that desert shall be, tho' it bear  
To the burning embrace of his beams  
Not a blade, or a leaf, or a blossom, for there  
Is the birthplace of visions and dreams.  
Now look forth o'er the numberless host of the hills,  
And behold, in its glory and grace  
What the sun hath accomplish'd. His influence  
fills  
All the throbbing abysses of space.  
He his force hath embodied in forms without end,  
And his will in his work is set forth.

Earth and water and air with each other contend  
To interpret and publish his worth.  
In the great, in the small, from the depth to the height,  
Thrills the pulse of his procreant powers.  
He beheld the world dark, and hath bathed it in light,  
Found Earth naked, and clothed her with flowers.”

---

The Eagle ceased. He had forgotten wholly  
To whom his words were utter'd. But this pause  
Aroused that other; who, recovering slowly  
From mute amaze, broke silence with applause.

“Bravo! 'Tis plaguily cold up here,  
But I listen'd with admiration.  
At home, o'er a pipe and a pot of beer,  
What a subject for conversation!

“It would never have enter'd *my* mind, I vow,  
To find such a deal in nothing.  
Poetic license, of course, I allow  
For what's put in poetic clothing.

“But your views, so far as I make them out,  
As to scientific farming,  
Drainage, and that sort of thing, no doubt  
Are highly suggestive and charming.

“ The water supply from the hills is good.  
In the desert there’s no vegetation  
For the want (thus much have I understood)  
Of a system of irrigation.

“ I have studied the nature of subsoils too.  
But your style’s more poetic than Plato’s.  
The sun, no doubt, has a deal to do  
With the flavour of peas and potatoes.

“ With the rest of your speech, in the main, I agree,  
And was pleased by its peroration ;  
Tho’ folks *might* find in it (pardon me !)  
Just a touch of exaggeration.

“ My sight is, unluckily, somewhat weak.  
And of all that excites your wonder  
I can see but little—nay, truth to speak,  
I see nothing at all—out yonder.

“ But tho’ loth to intrude on your precious time,  
May I ask have you any objection  
To teach me the trick of the art sublime  
You have brought to so great a perfection ?

“ I was never of those who despise that art.  
I am honestly anxious to know it.

And there's many a page I have learnt by heart  
From the works of each popular poet.

“ I've a notion of metre, a notion of rhyme,  
And it always has been my intention  
One of these days, if I get but time,  
To study the art of invention.”

---

“ Time,” said the Eagle, “ will be idly spent  
In thankless labour for invention seeking  
Where there is naught to seek or to invent :  
Naught but emotion into utterance breaking  
From the full heart wherein its power was pent.  
This comes and goes : but never comes it sought.  
And when it comes, it brings its own expression :  
Now check'd and struggling with tumultuous thought,  
Now pour'd melodious forth in full procession,  
And now again to burning rapture wrought,  
But always *true*. For this no rule holds good,  
And no receipt for this avails thee aught.  
But as when, smooth along the lucid flood,  
Reflected flocks of snowy swans come swimming,  
So swim the mystic forms without endeavour  
Into the soul ; and round about them, rimming  
Each radiant image, restless circles quiver.

Swift close the flashing furrows unawares  
Along their liquid paths. For flowing ever  
Is that unfathom'd element which bears  
The floating bark by Fancy built. And never,  
O never, may'st thou bind the labour'd bond  
Of finite speech on forms by Fancy seen !  
For, soon as seen, they fade. Far, far beyond  
Thine eager grasp the sweet shapes glide serene,  
Ere yet from off each fleeting forehead fair  
Hath Passion pluckt the visionary veil .  
That, robing, best reveals, their beauty rare.  
Divine Desire, that pants upon their trail,  
Himself is follow'd by divine Despair.  
So, mingled in the verse, doth melt away  
The vagrant vision which the verse in vain  
Throbs to record ; and in the poet's lay  
Naught but his own emotion doth remain.  
Safe in the circle of the senses five,  
For those that seek no more, contentment lies.  
Rest in the real. Reality will give  
To all thy questions confident replies.  
Follow the knowable. Hold fast the known.  
Nor seek thy missing sense of unknown things  
Which to the senses render response none,  
Being too far beyond their questionings.

But ply not thou the poet's untaught art.  
To *feel* it—this, this only, is to know it.  
The vision that is hidden in his heart  
The poet can reveal but to the poet.”

---

Then light as when over the lakes and shores  
Pure morn in a pearly mist hangs chill,  
Comes a rhythmic echo of unseen oars  
That is hail'd by some watcher at watch on the hill,  
And faint as the breath of a forest asleep  
When, dreaming, it dreams that the dawn is nigh,  
All around the repose of that airie steep  
On the live air trembled a fine sweet sigh.  
And it hover'd and heaved, and rose and sank,  
The light sound, fitfully sailing,  
Like the droopt wing adrip in the bulrush bank  
That a silver heron is trailing.  
What was it? The lightest of lovely things,  
Which, soon as in vain we have seen them,  
Flit from us. Scarce aught but a pair of wings,  
Two thrills with a kiss between them.

And “At last! at last! at last!”  
(As the vision upfloated fast,  
The soul of that Eagle thought)  
“The gods my desire have granted.

For he cometh, the Spirit long sought,  
Sigh'd for, and waited, and wanted.  
O hither ! O hither to me !  
Whence art thou ? What canst thou be,  
Exquisite creature, fashion'd so finely  
Of tremulous petals whose pure veins glow  
With gold and vermilion and azure, divinely  
Thrill'd by thine own vivid beauty ? as tho'  
Thou wert out fresh blossoms and beams created  
The brilliant beautiful body to be  
Of each loveliest dream that hath in me waited,  
Waiting wildly for thee, for thee !”

---

All in a flutter of flatter'd delight,  
And vain of his chance, but not trusting it quite,  
The Butterfly dandled his dainty flight.  
Half bashful, half bold, with a saucy swing  
And a tremour shy of each delicate wing,  
As, inwardly chuckling, he thought (poor thing !)

“ What an adventure ! a little alarming  
Some might think it. I find it charming.  
I the adored of an eagle ? I  
The chosen darling of Poesy ?  
Ah, if the others could only have heard  
All that he said to me, wondrous bird !

Wherefore tremble? or doubt my bliss?  
Surely 'tis all as it should be, this!  
Hath an eagle chosen his mate in me?  
Beauty's the equal of Genius. Thee,  
I, too, have dream'd of, singular spirit!  
Worthy of thine is the trust I inherit  
From many a bright presentiment  
In the days gone by of this day's event.  
For never, in truth, were they serious yet  
Those light caprices I now regret  
And recall with a blush. If in careless hours  
I dallied a while with the frivolous flowers  
That, down in the valley, as I went by,  
Did their best to attract mine eye,  
'Twas fancy merely and not true love.  
O fortunate breeze that hath borne me above,  
With thee to fly! and I care not where,  
But with *thee* to fly O the rapture rare!  
Welcome! 'Tis I: and I know thee: thou  
Who has taught me, also, myself to know!  
To thy call I come, by mine own heart led.  
It is I, it is thou, and so all is said!"

Then, to mimic the might of an eagle's flight,  
(Poor fool, with his rose-leaf wings!)

Already astray, on the gust his gay  
Bright atom of life he flings.  
But the wild winds leap from their mountain keep  
And, howling, hunt their prey.  
Struck, torn, stript, tost, forlorn and lost,  
He is wounded and whirl'd away.  
With crumpled wings for awhile he clings  
To the sharp rock's brambly brow,  
Then is chased by the strain of the storm again,  
Till he sinks in the valleys below.

And from bough to bough, and from tree to tree,  
As bruised and broken he falls, and falls,  
That Eagle above him he still can see  
Circling high o'er the mountain walls.  
The flowers, the little ones, tender and kind  
To their balmy bosoms receive him,  
And, in slumber lull'd, from the howling wind  
Warm shelter the lilacs weave him.

---

Sadly the downfall of that small aspirant  
The Eagle saw. Long while his softening eye  
Watch'd the frail image with its sightless tyrant  
Struggling in vain. "Thy spirit," he sigh'd, "was high.

Ah, wherefore, little one, so weak thy strength?  
Yon Mole" (and, while he spake, the unconscious Mole  
Was snoring, comfortably stretch'd at length  
In sleep—his only guerdon at the goal)  
"Yon Mole was stronger. Feeble wings, blind eyes,  
Pedant and sentimentalist, have done  
Their best to share the Poet's ecstasies,  
And, at their best, they both have fail'd. The one  
Snore on the height. O'erwhelm'd the other lies.  
What may he trust?"

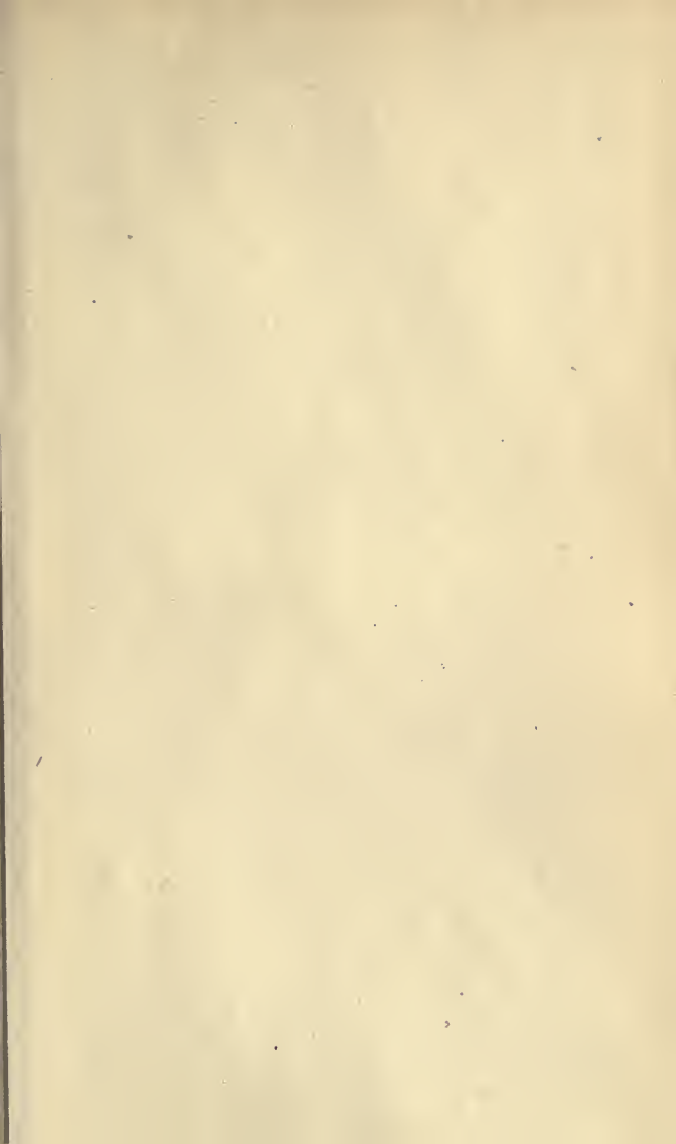
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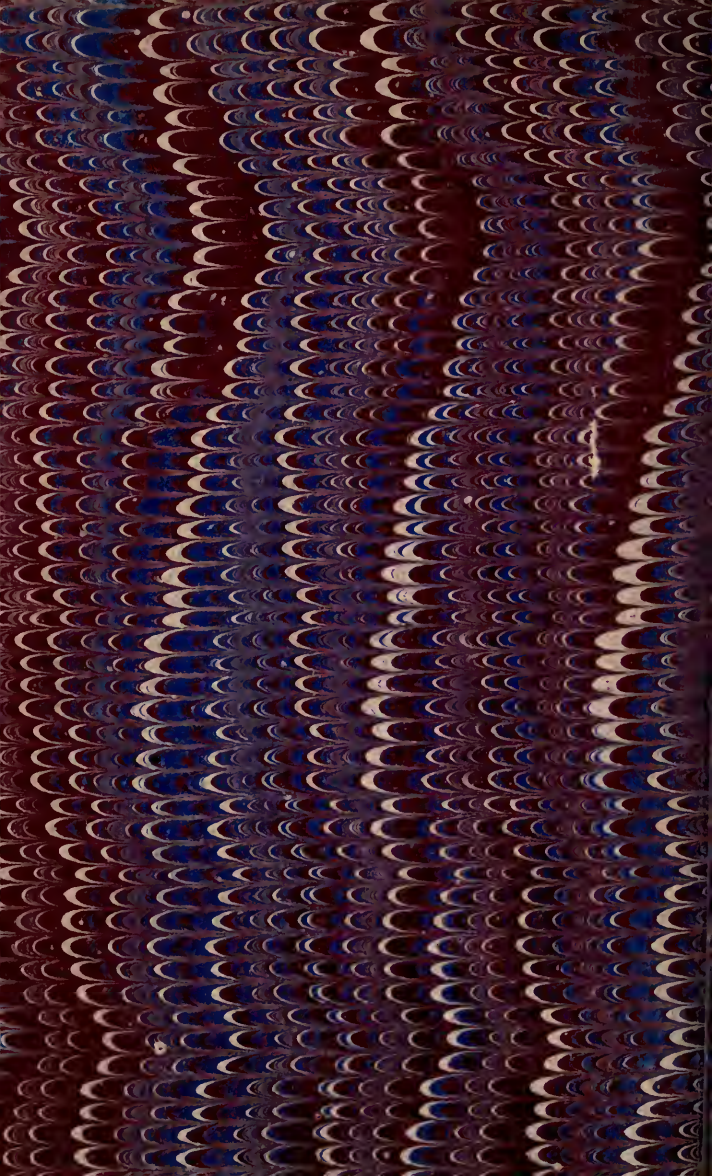
His strength to be alone.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









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